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DISCOURSES

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BY

JOHN ERSKINE, D. D.

LATE

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE OLD GRAYFRIARS
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ADVERTISEMENT.



THE Sermons contained in this volume, have not the advantage of having been prepared for the press by the Author. He announced his intention of publishing a Second Volume of Sermons, by an Advertisement prefixed to the first edition of the volume, of which the Public are already in possession. The decline of his health and his advanced age, prevented him from executing his purpose. But he signified to the Writer of this advertisement, that though he had not been able to revise the Sermons he intended to publish, a volume might notwithstanding be printed from his manuscripts.

It is hoped that the volume, now offered to the Public, though it is not free from the defects of posthumous publications, will not disappoint the expectations of those who knew either the distinguished worth or the superior

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talents

talents of the Author. In revising the proof-sheets, it was no more than justice to compositions which had not been prepared for publication, that such verbal emendations as the perspicuity, or the arrangement of single sentences required, should sometimes be hazarded. But the Public may be assured, that no change whatsoever has been made on the sentiments, the illustrations, or the peculiar style of the Author.

A Life of Dr. Erskine may perhaps follow the publication of this volume, though it cannot accompany it.

H. MONCREIFF WELLWOOD.

EDIN. 3d Feb. 1804.

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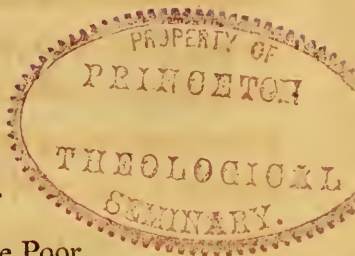
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It is with regret that the attention of the Reader is requested to the following list of ERRATA :

PAGE 14. Line 13. from the top, for "*incomes are*" read "*income is.*"

— 31. Line 7. from the bottom, for "*reconcile*" read "*reconciles.*"

— 38. Line 7. from the top, for "*as it as*" read "*as it is.*"

— 49. Line 5. from the bottom, for "*resemblance*" read "*remembrance.*"

— 193. Line 9. from the top, for "*he will in no wise*" read "*shall in no wise be.*"

— 206. Line 6. from the bottom, delete "*no.*"

— 217. Line 2. from ditto, delete "*a.*"

— 362. Note at the bottom, for "*1744*" read "*1774.*"

— 401. Line 4. from the bottom, for "*themselves*" read "*one another.*"

— 424. Line 11. from the bottom, for "*their*" read "*there.*"

— 434. Line 1. from the top, for "*too agitated*" read "*too much agitated.*"

— 436. Line 12. from the bottom, delete "*and imbitter.*"

— 447. Line 14. from the top, for "*charming never*" read "*charming ever.*"

— 467. Line 15. from the bottom, for "*ingenuous*" read "*ingenious.*"

— 491. Line 10. from the top, for "*diginty*" read "*dignity.*"

— 493. Lines 12. and 13. from the bottom, for "*the ner*" read "*the manner.*"



SERMON I.

THE RICHES OF THE POOR.

REVELATION ii. 9.

I KNOW THY POVERTY, BUT THOU ART RICH.

SOLOMON represents it, as a general appointment of Providence, that the rich and poor should meet together ^a, or be intermingled one with another. It was the will of the Lord, that the poor should never cease even out of that land ^b which the Lord cared for, and upon which the eyes of the Lord were always, from one end of the year to the other ^c. The distinction of rich and poor naturally arises from the right of property. Had man remained in a state of innocence, that right would have been unnecessary; for every one would have laboured according to his strength, and cheerfully supplied their necessities, who could not labour. But a community of goods, in man's present depraved state, is neither fit nor possible. It would encourage the indolent and dissipated to do nothing; and yet to secure themselves the comforts of life, by depriving

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Prov. xxii. 2.

^b Deut. xv. 11.

^c Deut. xi. 12.

the sober and industrious of the fruit of their labours. Thus, diligence would be discouraged, the earth remain uncultivated, and want of the necessities of life, and every misery connected with such want, would universally prevail. It was therefore the will of God, that every one should have an exclusive right to what he acquired by his honest labour, a right to possess and enjoy it himself, and to bestow it upon or bequeath it to others, as he pleased. Hence one raises himself to wealth, or inherits it; and another is reduced to poverty, by idleness, extravagance, or misfortune. Were the wealth of a nation equally divided, the equality could not continue, unless the right of property were destroyed, even in the share of wealth allotted to each individual by such a division; and all would be reduced to misery, by the uncertainty of retaining to-morrow what they possessed to-day. For securing property, greater or lesser societies were necessary, which should entrust to one or more power for their general protection. From these distinctions of fortune and power all ranks derive benefit. None, who was himself wealthy, would perform, for his wealthy neighbour, the mean and troublesome services necessary to afford him the conveniencies of life. And, if the poor lived among men all equally poor, there would be none to encourage and reward their labours. But property being secured by just and equitable laws, the rich, employing the poor, are freed from much fatigue, and acquire many enjoyments; and the services of the poor are repaid by what maintains themselves and their families, and often by the generous kindness and bounty of the rich, in the day of their sorrow and distress.

But

But are God's ways equal in placing men, no worse, perhaps better, than their opulent neighbours, in indigent and difficult circumstances? Yes.: all that we have is the gift of his Providence; and he may do what he will with his own ^d. He ceases not to be just or good, when he bestows upon one a greater measure than upon another, of strength, beauty, liveliness of imagination, or depth of judgment; and he regardeth not the rich more than the poor ^e, when he distributes, in different proportions, those gifts of fortune, in which human happiness is still less concerned. The greatest calamities of life equally affect every rank and station. Sickness and pain creep under the purple robe. Death delivers the crowned head to corruption. The rich, as well as the poor, weep, and will not be comforted, because beloved friends are taken from them, and they must see their faces and enjoy their solacing society no more. If the mean are burdened with cares which affect not the great; perplexities distract the great, of which the mean know nothing. One mourns that his food is coarse and scanty, and that he must deal bread with a sparing hand to his hungry children. Another foams and rages, because he has lost a small part of his extensive property; or, because his competitor has obtained a gainful commission or an honourable office, after which he or his near relation aspired. While Elias becomes a poor exile, and can hardly procure bread and water for his support, the king of Israel can find no rest on his bed, no relish in his royal dainties, because Naboth refuses to sell him his vineyard. Indeed, the most extensive possessions and enjoyments expose

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^d Matt. xx. 15.

^e Job xxxiv. 19.

men to the greatest variety of calamities and sorrows, as well as of cares and perplexities; especially in seasons of public danger and distress.

But I go farther; and this day publish, in the ears of our needy brethren, and of their children educated in George Heriot's hospital ^f, a truth highly important and interesting, yet too generally overlooked, and seldom sufficiently considered and believed. True Christianity makes its poorest votaries, as it did the church of Smyrna, whom persecution had reduced to poverty, and to whom my text immediately relates, rich in enjoyments; and bestows on them many an hour of heartfelt, transporting delight. Eyes, blinded by irregular passions and appetites, perceive not this. Religion, especially religion in rags, presents itself to their jaundiced sight, in dark, gloomy, forbidding colours, with a head always bowed down, and a breast oppressed, with a melancholy countenance and a joyless heart. I am about to combat an error, which instigates many to abhor religion, and to fly from her. I am about to prove, that the most valued earthly possessions and enjoyments of the rich are equally bestowed on the poor, or, at least, are not placed out of their reach; that many of the poor actually possess and enjoy spiritual riches, with which the most wealthy stranger to religion cannot intermeddle; and that all of them have the means of obtaining the most substantial and durable riches.

I. The poor are rich; for they have the most valuable possessions and enjoyments of the rich, and want only

^f Preached before the Governors of Heriot's Hospital.

only those which are of less value. And here I will not speak of those among the wealthy, who have not even the appearance of happiness. I attempt not to describe what they suffer in the gloomy hour of sober reflection, who have got riches by fraud, by treachery, by oppression, by cruelty, and perhaps by murder. I ask not, what are their pretensions to happiness, whose sordid avarice has hoarded up treasures, useless to society, and useless to themselves. Nor will I paint their feelings, whose thoughtless prodigality has ruined themselves, their families, and their virtuous creditors. I speak of those, whose wealth was honestly earned, and is employed in a manner more prudent and honourable. If wealth, honours, or power, are the objects of envy, or are eagerly desired, they are so, because they are considered as the price of favourite indulgences, or as the means of defence against uneasy sensations. The world, in general, despises those as weak, mean-spirited, and poor, in the midst of their affluence, who value wealth for the sake of possessing it, not for the sake of purchasing by it real enjoyment. Wealth, therefore, is to be measured by enjoyment; and he is the wealthiest man, whose pleasures are greatest and most durable. Compare the enjoyments, peculiar to affluence, with the enjoyments equally bestowed on those who, by the sweat of their brow, earn their bread. For a while, leave religion out of the account: still, the happiness of life consisteth not in the abundance of what a man possesses. You envy what you account the high and peculiar pleasures of the rich; but have not considered that the daily return of their entertainments and amusements deadens their relish. The oftener and the deeper they drink
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of the gratifications which wealth alone can purchase, so much the less do novelty, variety, or the expectation of these, sweeten their cup. Far different are the rare and frugal feasts of humble poverty with virtuous and beloved relations and neighbours. As they are more fully enjoyed because they seldom return, so they leave behind them a sweet and soothing remembrance. Conveniences, advantages, and sources of satisfaction, are, indeed, peculiar to the wealthy and honourable; and it becomes them not to despise, but to be thankful for these bounties of Providence. The prerogatives, however, which wealth bestows, are inconsiderable, when balanced with the blessings common to the high and the low. In understanding, seeing, hearing, speech, and other sources of pleasure the most frequent and considerable, the prince has no advantage above the peasant. Yet, who would sell these common blessings for thousands of gold and silver? What monarch would not rather renounce his crown than be deprived of them? Object not, that the great and wealthy can entertain their eyes and ears with more agreeable objects than men of low degree. Ask them, what are those pleasures of their senses, the loss of which would occasion them the greatest regret. They would answer you, We would deem the power of beholding the chambers of a palace, finished with the most elegant taste, and furnished with the utmost magnificence and splendour, a sorry indemnification for confinement to those chambers, if we were never more to behold the sun shine in his brightness; the moon and stars giving lustre and cheerfulness to the night; the mountains covered with grass, and the valleys with corn; and the flowers of the garden, and trees
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of the field, so richly adorned, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them. We must prefer these enchanting prospects of the works of nature to all the beauty produced by human art. We would not purchase the delights of singing men, and singing women, and musical instruments; by forfeiting agreeable conversation with our families and friends, and no more listening to our beloved children, in their first and feeble attempts to lisp out their sentiments, desires, and affections. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God ordains praise to himself, and prepares a joy to us, their parents, which no artificial harmony can equal. Yes, my hearers, family comforts, of all created and sublunary comforts, are the best; and these are equally open to all ranks of men. By a chearful, conscientious discharge of their respective duties, and by a thousand spontaneous and unsolicited marks of tender attachment, of esteem, of sympathy, and of gratitude, husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, smooth to each other the rugged path of life, sooth its sorrows, and give a higher flavour to its joys. While the wealthy and honourable, not infrequently, wait long, and without success, for opportunities of gaining and securing the friendship of men of influence and power; every day, by an affectionate, obliging behaviour, the brother of low degree may endear himself to those under the same roof with him. Surrounded, from one end of the year to another, by those whom he best loves, he may enjoy serene unsullied delight, in their friendly looks, endearing words, and mutual offices of kindness. But I must draw this argument to a conclusion; and, if possible, persuade those selfish and

and grovelling souls sometimes to be found in cottages, as well as in palaces. View not with envy the situation of the opulent. “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” The best things, bestowed on them, are bestowed on the poor also. Forbid the rich the use of bread, water, milk, and those other most common and most agreeable meats and drinks, the cheapness and plenty of which give the poor access to enjoy them; leave them those delicacies of the table, and other enjoyments, which wealth alone can purchase; but leave them no one comfort which the poor can command—Say, whether would the rich with all the advantages peculiar to them, or the poor with the common bounties of nature and Providence, be in this case most happy? Must not the first be wretched? and may not the last be happy indeed? Where then, unless in a deluded imagination, are those superior joys, for which you envy the wealthy? Have they alone cause to bless their heavenly Benefactor? And are the enjoyments of the poor so small and inconsiderable, that they have no cause of thankfulness? What! is it just and equal to be ungrateful for the most valuable comforts, because comforts less valuable are denied? The happy hours of the rich are often less frequent and numerous than those of the poor. Gaiety and cheerfulness, in infancy and childhood, gladden the offspring of the peasant as well as the offspring of the prince. The sleep of the labouring man is as sweet as his who has acquired or inherited the largest fortune. The mind of the servant may be more contented and serene than that of the master. And the voice of joy is heard among them who reap the harvest, when
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the hearts of those, for whom they reap it, even in the midst of laughter are sorrowful. I might here observe, that the wealthy and honourable are apt to estimate the prospects, which their situations and their pursuits in life open to them, more highly than their present possessions. Now, the poor are often endowed with talents, genius, vigour, activity, and perseverance in their efforts, by which they may have all the satisfaction which the hope or the prospect of future events can create. The Lord, by bestowing upon them those endowments, and opening a door for their successful exertions, often raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill; that he may set them with princes, and cause them to inherit honour ^s. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth ^b; the iniquity of despising able and worthy men, for the meanness of their birth, or the narrowness of their external possessions.

II. Many of the poor, yea, all of them who have obtained precious faith, even in this life, possess and enjoy the best riches.

Your time permits me not to display, at large, the present gain of godliness. I will not tell you, how Christianity promotes diligence, frugality, and the faithful discharge of every trust, and thus contributes to success in the different offices and employments of life. I will not shew, how it preserves from luxury, extravagance, and other sources of want. I will not unfold, how it moderates the violent appetites and passions, which poison many a constitution, and so often shorten human life. I pass over in silence, how a contented mind enjoys

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with satisfaction, blessings, of which unbounded desires of something yet unpossessed kills the relish. I say not, how Christian generosity and beneficence, when prejudice and interest do not interfere, procure universal esteem. I confine myself to those spiritual and heavenly riches which the faith of God's elect, and that alone, enables them to possess and enjoy.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles represents himself and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel, as "having nothing, and yet possessing all things ⁱ." This is no empty boast. His words were words of truth and soberness; and they describe the real condition of every sincere believer, though he should be, in outward circumstances, the most destitute and afflicted.

1. *They possess a title and claim to all things.* To Jesus, the heir of all things, they are united by faith and love; and, therefore, what he hath is theirs, in as far as it is requisite for their happiness. Unworthy as they are, by their apostacy, of the least of God's mercies, through the sufferings and obedience of "the worthy Lamb that was slain," God is just, as well as merciful, in bestowing upon them every blessing. Jesus has not only expiated their guilt, but brought in for them an everlasting righteousness ^j. No wonder that the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake ^k. Were temporal blessings conferred on Israel, as a reward of Abraham's faith and holiness? Have generous princes and senates often rewarded uncommon services to the state, by conferring, on the posterity of those who performed them, riches and honours? And should it seem a thing incredible, that God should reward the unparalleled sufferings, and the spotless obedience of his own Son, by bestowing

ⁱ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

^j Dan. ix. 24.

^k Isa. xlii. 21.

stowing on his spiritual seed, all things pertaining to life and godliness, to time and to eternity ¹?

2. *They possess an interest in him, who is the fountain of all blessedness, and the possessor of heaven and earth.*

Be it so, that they cannot say, this house or these lands are our's. They have ground to say, this God is our God for ever and ever; and what greater riches can there be, than to want nothing? What that is essential to their happiness can they want, who have the God of heaven and earth for their God? The poorest of them may triumphantly make his boast in the Lord, and say, mine is his power to defend, his wisdom to direct, his mercy to pity and pardon me; and mine is his all-sufficiency to satisfy the larger and capacious desires of my immortal soul. Other possessions may be lost; yet deprived, or threatened to be deprived of dying comforts, I am not wretched. The Lord liveth. Blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted ^m. In chastisements, I discern the hand of a kind and affectionate Father, who tenderly cares for me. In the sorrowful events, which force tears from my eyes, I know there is a gracious design. To his bosom, who gave me the wound, I betake myself for relief. I listen, with silent attention; I hear the heavenly voice: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For, since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." The book of God abounds with such gracious declarations. Christians often receive them

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¹ See M'Laurin's "prejudices against the Gospel."

^m Psal. xviii. 46.

with contending emotions of perplexity and acquiescence. At length the contention ends in a composure and tranquillity, which wealth and honour cannot bestow ; and which the want of them cannot destroy. He, who is thus happy in God, though without many things enjoyed by others, cannot be said to want them ; even as angels want not the grovelling, earthly enjoyments, without which they are completely happy.

3. *They have a charter which cannot be revoked ; and which secures their possession of all that is good for them.*

God hath given them exceeding great and precious promises, even with respect to the life that now is ⁿ. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing ^o. For God the Lord is a sun and shield ; he will give grace ; he will give glory ; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly ^p. He hath said of Zion, I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread ^q. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn ^r. And I will encamp about thine house, because of the army ; because of him that passeth by ; and because of him that returneth ^s. God is faithful, who will not suffer his people to be tempted above what they are able ; but will, with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it ^t. All things shall work together for their good ^u. Now, God is not a man, that he should lie ;

ⁿ 2 Pet. i. 4. ¹ Tim. iv. 8.

^o Psal. xxxiv. 10.

^p Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

^q Psal. cxxxii. 15.

^r Isa. liv. 17.

^s Zech. ix. 8.

^t 1 Cor. x. 14.

^u Rom. viii. 28.

lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it ? Or, hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ^v ? And what is the sum of what he hath said to the poorest and meanest of those who believe in his Son ? The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee ; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee ^w.

4. True Christians, through the operations of the Spirit of Christ, and the influence of faith purifying the heart, are enriched with a temper of mind, and with dispositions which are the seeds of true happiness.

Grace in the heart is as gold tried in the fire ^x, which can stand the test of temptation ; and which preserves its purity and firmness, both in the warm sun-shine of prosperity, and in the fiery furnace of affliction. The health of the soul confers peculiar advantages, both for relishing every comfort, and for suffering every calamity of this life. When the passions are under the controul of reason and religion, and proportioned to the worth of their objects, comfort dwells in the heart. Now, faith points out the objects which are most worthy ; it directs towards them the chief force of the affections, and it weakens the bias of the heart to every object which is less valuable. The soul, calm and serene, though earthly enjoyments are with-held, triumphs in the certain accomplishment of her highest desires.—Disappointments sink her not ; for there is a better part, of which they cannot bereave her. The reproaches of men destroy not the assurance of God's love. The loss of wealth deprives not of peace of conscience.

A soul

^v Numb. xxiii. 19.

^w Isa. liv. 10.

^x Rev. iii. 18.

A soul dwelling at ease has more than compensates bodily sickness and pain. Faith and hope, sobriety, temperance, and self-denial, gird up the loins of the mind, render it fit for struggling with adverse fortune, and blunt the edge of strokes which they cannot avert. He, who sits loose from the world, and, when riches and honours and pleasures increase, sets not his heart upon them, bids fairest not to be overwhelmed with grief, when sublunary comforts are withdrawn. When covetousness, ambition, and sensuality, are subdued, solicitude ceases to torment. He possesses most, whose wants are fewest; not he, whose incomes are largest: for often, when goods increase, they are increased who eat them ^y, and who consume not only the abundance which the owner possesses, but the hours which he would much rather have spent in his closet, or with his family. Contentment and satisfaction are often attained by the poor Christian, never by the wealthy profligate, whose joy, in what he hath, is perpetually destroyed by his thirst for that which he hath not. The poor may have, and feel that they have enough; the rich cannot have more. The faith of the Gospel sweetens every condition, enriches more than all other possessions, and supplies the want of every thing besides. Religion consecrates the understanding, the will, and the affections, to the best and noblest purposes; and opens the purest sources of transporting delight. A good man roams not from one business, from one company, from one amusement to another, in quest of ease and pleasure; for, a good man shall be satisfied from himself ^z. He hath within, a never-failing spring of satisfaction,

^y Eccles. v. 11.

^z Prov. xiv. 14.

satisfaction, which others, in vain, look for abroad. Indeed, the pleasures, peculiar to him, and resulting from the exercises of grace, and the performance of duty, are more than equivalent to those which the men of the world enjoy. We value lands and money, and account them wealth, because they purchase many things in themselves agreeable. If then, though without lands or money, we have that which procures enjoyments still more agreeable, we are truly rich. The exercise of grace, and the faithful performance of duties produce joys far exceeding those of worldly men, when their corn and wine and oil do most abound. The work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever ^a. Reflections that we have acquired sublunary honours and riches and pleasures, afford no comfort. In the saddest hour, the remembrance is sweet, that love to God, concern for his glory, and compassion to the distressed, animated our hearts in happier times. The resistance and the victory over temptation yield a satisfaction which never flowed from a compliance with its solicitations. In the meanest and most afflicted condition, the testimony of conscience, that, even in difficult trials, we have not wickedly departed from our God, administers a certain solace. He, therefore, is rich, who is filled with the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost; and the most distressing and perplexed situations have often displayed the intrinsic and superior excellency and value of those spiritual treasures.

5. *True Christians are rich in the well grounded prospect of a state beyond the grave, where every source of sorrow shall be dried up; and every spring of joy opened.*

What

What can reconcile the mind of man to the painful apprehension of sinking, for ever, into nothing, except the more dreadful idea of dwelling with devouring flames and with everlasting burnings. Indeed, without the prospect of a continuing, happy existence, they who enjoyed most, would feel inexpressible anguish and despondency, because they could not help recollecting that, perhaps, during the next hour, all that they love and delight in, might be exchanged, either for insensibility, or for endless woe. How would the physician be courted, who, in a seemingly incurable disease, could assure the patient, that he would recover his perfect health, and live yet many years. What dying prince would not purchase a longer lease of life, with the loss of his crown? How happy then, and blessed must real Christians be? For the faithful and true witness has assured them: “Because I live, ye shall live also ^b. “To you to die is gain ^c. God shall wipe away all “tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more “death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall “there be any more pain; for the former things are “passed away ^d. In death, we shall only leave one “world and society for another far more agreeable “and perfect. When absent from the body, we “shall be present with the Lord ^e, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand “are pleasures for ever more. In my Father’s house “are many mansions, where the glory of God “shines with more transplendent lustre than here “below,

^b John xiv. 17.^c Phil. i. 21.^d Rev. xxi. 7.^e 2 Cor. v. 8.^f John xiv. 2, 3.

“ below, where new wonders are continually discovered, and continually celebrated in new songs of praise. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you to myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also ^f.” In this valley of tears, if uncertain hopes of objects, the enjoyment of which seldom equals the expectation, are so solacing, how valuable then, the hopes, the accomplishment of which will infinitely exceed all that the human imagination ever conceived. How despicable all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the glory of them, compared with that kingdom, which cannot be moved ^g; where even the meanest subject is a king and a priest to his God ^h. A heavenly light must brighten their darkest nights of indigence and distress, who are rich in longing desires, in the firm faith, in the lively hope, and the joyful anticipations of the invisible glories of the eternal world. The joys of which poverty can deprive us, weighed with those which arise from the assurance and the foretaste of heaven, would seem as the dross of the bucket, and as the small dust of the balance. Let pain, disease, or the decays of nature, gradually unpin the earthly house of this tabernacle; when the enemy and destroyer of nature has done his worst, there remains, for the people of God, a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The passage to that blessed abode, if dark and gloomy, is short and safe, conducted by a kind, and careful, and unerring guide. Sons of fraud and violence strip the Christian of what the world calls riches. Pained he must be; for such an affliction is not joyous, but grievous. Yet, the hope of treasures,

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which

^f John xiv. 23.^g Heb. xii. 28.^h Rev. i. 6.

which thieves cannot break through and steal, relieves and mitigates all his pain. Cause him to hear the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war. Though without are fightings, and within are fears, and he deeply feels the distresses and dangers of his country; he rejoices that God has appointed a place for his people, where no dread of disastrous events shall awaken their anxiety; no envy, jealousy, covetousness, or ambition, interrupt their joy, or disturb their rest.—Bid him a sorrowful farewell, ye beloved friends, in whose society he hoped to have finished his pilgrimage. The wearing out of the dregs of life, without the solace of your aid and sympathy, bows him to the ground. His house appears wild and solitary; and every remaining earthly comfort seems to become insipid. But in the depths of his distress, he hears a voice from heaven, proclaiming, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” His sinking heart is supported. He lifts up to heaven his sorrowful eyes; and, by faith, beholds his dear deceased friends in yonder bright and glorious regions, whither he hopes soon to follow; and anticipates the day, when, after a long separation, he shall meet them again in joy, never more to part. Thrice happy day! when virtuous children shall see again the godly parents, whose eyes they closed with filial affection; when pious parents shall again behold their dutiful and promising children, whom, with sighs and tears, they followed to their graves; and when devout yoke-fellows shall renew the bond of sacred friendship and affection, which death had for a time torn asunder.—Compare the serenity of mind and strong consolation, often experienced by the Christian, at a time when Providence takes away that which was most dear to him, with the

the man of the world in like melancholy circumstances, unsupported by the hopes of a blessed immortality. Which of them is happy, or which of them is wretched? Who is poor, and who is rich? Is he poor, who can rejoice under the pressure of his severest afflictions? Is he rich, who hath no consolation in his sorrow? Tell, ye followers of Jesus, though your lot is cast in poverty and meanness, and though ye now suffer heavy affliction by the will of God, would ye exchange for the wealth of the Indies, the rapturous views of Zion's king in his beauty, and of the land that is now afar off, by means of which, the God of hope fills you with peace and joy in believing? Would ye, for the sake of a temporal crown, renounce the hopes of a crown of glory? or your share in the glorious society of the sons of God? I know, you would not deliberate a moment. With the utmost detestation and contempt, ye would instantly reject all that this world can offer or bestow, when put in the balance with your hope in Christ. In judging so, ye would judge wisely, and well. For, what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

III. The poor are rich, for they have the means of acquiring and securing the most substantial and durable riches.

They have large, free, and generous offers, of all that is needful to make them happy. To the poor the Gospel is preached ⁱ; and thus a price is put into their hands to get wisdom ^j. You do not call him poor, who has indeed no houses or lands in proper-

ⁱ Luke vii. 22.

^j Prov. xvii. 16.

ty, but who has money ; or who, by his credit, can, when he chuses, command money to purchase them. The favour of God, fellowship with him, and conformity to his blessed image, are absolutely necessary, and fully sufficient for the happiness even of the present life. Now, the poor, the blind, the wretched, whether in their outward estate, or in their state of mind, are allowed, nay, even invited and commanded to buy these inestimable blessings of Christ ^k, without money, and without price ^l. To him, and to all these treasures laid up in him, every one of them hath full access. The uncreated wisdom of God, with whom are durable riches and righteousness, whose fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and his revenue than choice silver ^m, was anointed to preach to the poor the glad tidings, that, notwithstanding their meanness and indigence, their guilt and unworthiness, God hath sent him to lead all who come to him, in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment ; that he may cause them to inherit substance, and fill all their treasures ^m.

Alas ! By many of the poor, as well as the rich, these offers are neglected and despised ; and, in the blessings offered, they see no excellency and beauty, why they should desire them. Instigated by covetousness, ambition, or sensuality, they place their chief desires on possessions and enjoyments, which, when attained, ever disappoint their hopes, and whose continuance is altogether uncertain and precarious. The voice of God calls upon them : “ Set
“ your affections on things above, not on things on
“ the

^k Rev. iii. 18.

^l Isa. lv. 1.

^m Prov. viii. 18,—21.

“ the earth ⁿ. Seek ye first the kingdom of God
“ and his righteousness ^o. Labour not for the meat
“ that perisheth ; but for that meat, which endureth
“ to eternal life ^p.” For the meat that perisheth, ye
may labour without success ; for, sometimes, bread
is not to the wise, nor riches to men of understand-
ing, nor favour to men of skill ^q. As for the meat
that endureth to eternal life, the Son of man giveth
it to those whom the Father hath sealed ; and, there-
fore, their labour, who seek it through him, and
accept his gift, cannot be ineffectual. There is a
better part, which shall be denied to none, and ta-
ken from none who sincerely choose it : for, God
never said to the house of Jacob, seek ye my face in
vain. They, who have gained the prize of the high
calling of God in Christ Jesus, will feel no want of
the objects which appear great to a blinded world ;
nay, they will “ account them loss and dung for the
“ excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our
“ Lord ^r.”

And now, let me ask my hearers, do ye earnestly
desire to partake of the privileges of sincere Chri-
stians ? If ye say you do ; remember, that none can
enjoy their privileges who do not possess their tem-
per and character ; and, like them, crucify the flesh,
with the affections and lusts ^s. Zion’s king is holy ;
and his subjects must resemble him in holiness. He
has no lot, nor portion in the blessings of his king-
dom, in whom the dominion of pride, selfishness,
envy, and revenge, is not broken ; and whose soul
is not adorned with love, humility, gentleness, con-
tentment, patience, temperance, and purity. Would
ye,

ⁿ Col. iii. 2.^o Matt. vi. 33.^p Isa. vi. 27.^q Eccles. ix. 11.^r Phil. iii. 8.^s Rom. viii. 9.

ye, therefore, be truly happy? Aspire after those riches and ornaments of the hidden man of the heart; and go to him for them, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ^t, that, out of his fulness, all who have received him, and who believe on his name, may receive grace for grace ^u. Think not, that the Redeemer will separate and divide the blessings of his purchase. All of them, or none of them, must be your portion. Accept him, not only as your deliverer from the wrath to come, but as your deliverer from the bondage of corruption. While ye rely on the efficacy of his blood and merits, for your pardon and acceptance with God; hearken also to his teaching, submit to his government, copy after his example, and depend on the influence of his spirit and grace. And, having thus received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk also in him ^v; cleave to him with purpose of heart ^w; let nothing seduce you from your allegiance; endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ ^x; and decline no danger to which duty may expose you. Let not these be the purposes of an hour, but make them your steady, persevering and settled resolutions. I say not, that this temper and conduct will free you from outward poverty. In some circumstances it may make, or it may keep you poor. Yet, in poverty, thus occasioned, you shall be truly rich. Ye shall receive an hundred fold now in this present time, and in the world to come, eternal life ^y.

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^t Col. i. 19.

^u John i. 12, 14, 16.

^v Col. ii. 6.

^w Acts xi. 23.

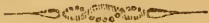
^x 2 Tim. ii. 3.

^y Mark x. 30.

The extent of my subject, and my inability to reduce it to narrower bounds, are all the apology I can make for the length of this discourse. I will not farther trespass on your patience, by hinting the advices and comforts my subject suggests to the poor, and to their instructors; or even by the addresses, usual on such occasions, to the governors, to the teachers, and to the youth educated in George Heriot's hospital. To the last, I had an opportunity, yesterday, of giving some plain scriptural exhortations, suited to their age, and to the dangerous and ensnaring times, in which we live. I cannot however omit to express my satisfaction, that no period, since I have had the honour of being a minister of this city, has been more remarkable for the health, and peaceable decent behaviour of the youth, educated in this generous charity, than these last years. Through the blessing of God, new regulations for keeping the hospital bed-rooms clean and airy, have so greatly contributed to the first, that, of above a hundred boys, in five years, only one has died. And an attention to the conduct of the children, strict and steady, yet winning and kind, has much promoted the second. How important the services of the treasurer of the hospital^z have been, in both respects, is too well known to need my testimony. They have a valuable testimony in the unbiass'd approbation of the public spirited governors; and the chearfulness with which the teachers, and those in inferior departments in the hospital, have executed his salutary plans.

^z Mr. John Carmichael was Treasurer of Heriot's Hospital at the time when this Sermon was preached.

SERMON II.



ON SELF-DENIAL.



JOHN xii. 26.

IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, LET HIM FOLLOW ME, AND WHERE I AM,
THERE SHALL ALSO MY SERVANT BE : IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, HIM
WILL MY FATHER HONOUR.

IN contemplating with humble and penitent, yet joyful admiration, the greatness manifested by the Son of God, in his self-denying obedience, it is highly important for us to remember that his character is held up to us, not merely to gratify our curiosity, or even to encourage our faith ; but, in order to excite us to a diligent imitation of so glorious a pattern. This subject naturally arises from our text, taken in connection with the preceding and the following verses. There the leading sentiments expressed by the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, are in substance these : “ The hour of my approaching sufferings, is the hour in which I shall be glorified : for without these I cannot bestow the extensive and important blessings, the communication of which, is my honour and delight. He who prefers life to the calls of reverence to God and benevolence to man, loses the chief end of life, and forfeits his own true interest. He, who, after
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my example, sacrifices life to duty, lays out with honour and to advantage, that which he means to lose. Cheerfully, therefore, I submit to that pain of body and anguish of spirit, by which my Father's name shall be glorified, sinners redeemed, and unserved obedience recommended.

In correspondence with this train of thought, I shall *first* consider the self-denial, in which we should follow Jesus; and *secondly* shew, that self-denial is the path to true honour and greatness.

I. I am to consider the self-denial, in which we should follow Jesus.

1. The self-denial of Jesus was free and voluntary. Virtuous actions acquire additional worth, when they are done with readiness and pleasure. Men, I acknowledge, may manifest patience in bearing calamities brought upon them in the ordinary course of Providence, or inflicted as a punishment of their crimes. They cannot, however, in these circumstances, exercise self-denial: for self-denial supposes, that our escape from natural evils, or our attainment of natural goods, is what we might have chosen, but did not choose. He alone is deemed a hero, who, from principles of conscience and honour, encounters dangers and difficulties, which, in like circumstances, the selfish and dastardly avoid. Now all our Saviour's acts of self-denial were thus voluntary. It was willingly, not by constraint, that he who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. He, who, if he had aimed at universal dominion, could have easily gained it, withdrew himself from the

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people,

people, when they would have taken him by force to make him a king. When Peter would have dissuaded him from suffering, he rebuked the forward Apostle with unusual severity. No man could have taken his life from him, had he not laid it down of himself. Legions of Angels were ready at his command to defend him from his enemies. No oppression, no persecution, no sorrow befel him which he did not consent to endure. He could have procured every enjoyment which blinds the understanding, or perverts the hearts of the sons of men. But he emptied himself. Nothing could have otherwise interrupted his happiness, whose freedom from sin must have freed him from all its sorrowful consequences.

2. The self-denial of Jesus was wise and rational. It was not placed in those trifles, or in those unnecessary and self-tormenting penances, in which, by the weak or crafty, self-denial hath been often placed. It did not teach him a dark, morose, melancholy temper, or excite him to fly from the intercourse of mankind. When the exalted end of his commission permitted him, he both knew, and tasted the comforts of social life. He “came eating and drinking.” He accepted invitations to feasts. He expressed the ordinary sensations of pain, and the common desire to avoid it; and he taught us by his example, that care which is requisite for the other world does not require a stoical insensibility, or a monkish contempt either of present pleasures, or of present distresses. His self-denial betrayed him not to forget his different relations in life, or to neglect his duties as a man, as a son, as a friend, as a citizen, or as an instructor of mankind. If he restrained the innocent desires of nature, or endured what was painful, or renounced

nounced what was agreeable, it was for ends noble and generous. What gratifies the senses, what the many account greatness, were objects too low for his pursuit. If he had courted Time's fading honours and perishing joys, his sufferings could not have expiated the guilt of men, or have rendered them attentive to their best and lasting interests. To fulfil his Father's will was his highest aim; and nothing which obstructed this could be grateful to his heart.

3. His self-denial was extensive. The trials of its sincerity and strength were not few or inconsiderable, or of a short continuance. He had indeed no struggle with corrupt passions and appetites like ours; for in his heart perfect order and harmony reigned perpetually. Yet his self-denial was not, on that account, the less illustrious. The world had no power either to allure or to affright him. Extraordinary heroism and steadiness were necessary to maintain a constant contention with prevailing prejudice, folly and vice.—While others are happily ignorant of the distresses and calamities awaiting them, he knew from the beginning whatever was to befall him. He previously foresaw the snares laid for him, the violence done to him, his cruel and unjust treatment before the Jewish and Roman tribunals, Peter denying him, Judas betraying him, the cowardice of the other disciples, the shameful and painful death of the cross, and the exquisite agonies of soul, which far exceeded his bodily torment.—Men are often, for the good of others, averse to renounce a favourite enjoyment, or to undertake a difficult service. But the labours and sufferings, in which Jesus voluntarily engaged, were unparalleled.

Indeed, his life was almost a continued series of sorrow, persecution, and reproach. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet. But rest and ease, in the case of others so refreshing and innocent, he declined, sacrificing every personal consideration to his public duty. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.—And for whom did he offer these costly sacrifices? Was it for those who cherished tender feelings of his matchless love, and were willing to deny themselves for his honour? The gratitude of those, to whose service we devote ourselves, excites and strengthens our self-denial, and even renders it agreeable; and the consciousness of large and extensive usefulness, affords to a generous heart high delight. But Jesus knew that, by the greater part of the generation among whom he lived, as well as by a great proportion of men in every succeeding age, his instructions would be rejected, and his benefits repaid with hatred and malignity.

4. The self-denial of Jesus was disinterested. The vigour, courage, and steadiness displayed by many in their labours, hazards, and sufferings, are instigated by their personal interests. But what return could Jesus expect from men, which could bear any proportion to that which he renounced, or to that which he suffered? What could he gain by his self-denial, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily?—Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus. Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. He was prompted to this by love to God. He well knew how precious the souls of men were in God's sight. And, therefore, that the world
might

might know he loved the Father, he consecrated himself a sacrifice for guilty men. To do God's will was his delight, and that law which required his obedience unto the death, was in his heart. He was also moved by love to the human race. He pitied our wretchedness; and raising thousands from misery to blessedness, was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. Fatigue and torture of body, perplexity and anguish of spirit, though in their own nature not joyous, but grievous, he, notwithstanding, cheerfully chose to bear, that an innumerable multitude of rebels against heaven, might be delivered from going down to the pit, and might see the light of life.

Would we be truly great? Our self-denial must resemble his. Would we approve ourselves his disciples indeed? We must follow him in that rude and thorny path, through which he hath travelled.—Our self-denial must be voluntary. Advantages and enjoyments must be freely forsaken, which we had it in our power to regain or to retain: labours and sufferings in the service of God must be welcomed: and life itself must not be counted dear, if, by the sacrifice even of life, we can finish our course with joy.—Yet our self-denial must, at the same time, be wise, founded on important motives, and flowing from mature deliberation. They, who, through pride, enthusiasm, or weariness with the world, fly from joy as an evil, or court pain as a good, follow not Jesus. There is no merit in despising the gifts of heaven, and acting the part of self-tormentors. But with a quiet and resigned spirit, to mortify our favourite passions, and part with our dearest friends and enjoyments, rather than make shipwreck

wreck of faith, and of a good conscience, are acts of self-denial, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ. It is wisdom as well as piety to sell earthly treasures for the pearl of great price, and to count all things else "as loss and dung," that we may know Christ in the power of his resurrection, and may be conformed to his death.—Our self-denial must not be confined within narrow bounds, applied to that which is easy, and not to that which is difficult; but it must be exercised wherever our duty demands it. When danger appears in the high-way of holiness, we must not avoid it by turning to the right hand or to the left. Threatenings must not intimidate, and labours must not weary us; opposition must be encountered with steadfastness; and nothing must seem burdensome or grievous, which we are called to perform or endure. In every circumstance, faithfulness to God and to conscience must be maintained. Perhaps, my brother, thy most extensively useful and disinterested deeds are misrepresented, or reproached, or repaid with ingratitude. But be not thou, on that account, weary of well-doing. Though Envy seek to obscure and blacken thy good qualities which she cannot reach, her sentences, however haughtily pronounced, cannot transform light into darkness, or sweet into bitter. When the love of God or of man requires the sacrifices of riches, ease, pleasure, reputation, or even of life itself, deny it not. Never can we sufficiently love him whose love to us, and whose inestimable benefits, so much merit our love, and whose restraints and precepts are all gracious and kind. Poor is that love which appears only in transient emotions of affection, or in inactive songs of praise. That is the brightest day
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of the generous Christian, when the strength of love is manifested by some act of self-denying obedience, some conquest of headstrong appetite, some resignation to the disposals of Providence, in opposition to his strong though innocent wishes. No heights, or rather depths, of self-denial are impossible, when the heart burns with love to God. Such a love triumphs over vicious and irregular inclinations, promotes dignity and elevation of spirit, and enables a man to hold fast his integrity, so as never to let it go. It asks not, what have I done for God? but, what can I do for him? Forgetting the things behind, it presses forward to the things before. Love also to our fellow-men, and especially to our fellow-Christians, greatly cherishes that self-denial, without which, the good offices we need, one from another, in many cases, cannot be performed. Hence Paul speaks of “the labour of love^a.” A participation of the same human nature, and much more a participation of the same Divine image, powerfully instigates us to deny our personal ease and convenience, and to engage and persist in the most troublesome exertions for rescuing others from destruction, or for promoting their true happiness. The remembrance of Him who shed his blood to wash us from our sins, reconcile the Christian to the meanest service, and to the bitterest sufferings for the sake of those whom he regards as the friends of his Saviour. He considers the best means of relieving the indigent. He applies to the generous for assistance. Not discouraged by difficulties, he himself lends a helping hand. “Shall unthankfulness, reproach, or
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^a 1 Thess. i. 3.

persecution, prevent my services to my fellow-men; when for those who reproached and persecuted him, Jesus laboured, and suffered, and died? Let me convince my enemies that my sentiments and dispositions are more excellent than theirs. Well is my self-denial rewarded in the heaven-born satisfaction of melting their hearts into godly contrition, and overcoming their evil with my good."

Lastly, Our self-denial must be generous and disinterested. Actions ascribed to this noble motive, often flow from an artful and disguised selfishness. The bounty of many is a species of merchandise. One purchases reputation; another hires guides and assistants in the path to wealth or honour. Men restrain passions and appetites less eager, that they may indulge inclinations more violent. He whose heart meditates terror, dares danger, and does the duty of a brave officer or soldier, from the fear of shame or the dread of punishment—If our self-denial has no nobler source, what do we more than others? Do not even infidels and hypocrites and profligates the same? It is no self-denial in the buyer to give his money for that which exceeds it in value; nor in a merchant to part with a commodity for double its price. And it is an ignoble hypocritical selfishness, which seeks outward gain by an appearance of godliness or benevolence. Then only do we imitate the pattern of Christ, when our sacrifices flow from zeal for the glory of God, and love to our fellow-men. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

II. I am to shew, that a self-denial, resembling the self-denial of our Lord, is the path to true honour and greatness.

1. It is in itself great and honourable. True honour and greatness arise from character and conduct, independent of the opinions and the judgments of other men. It is not derived from noble descent, external pomp, or magnificence, a numerous and splendid train of attendants, the command of powerful armies, or the dominion over extensive empires. These are adventitious circumstances, by which the God of nature and providence sometimes distinguishes the vilest of men.—In such things as these, however, the blinded Jews had imagined that the Messiah, promised to their fathers, would display his greatness. God's thoughts are not as men's thoughts. He, whose mother was a mean woman; who was himself born in a stable; who lived despised, reproached, and persecuted; and died a painful and shameful death; was, notwithstanding, superior to the kings of the earth. An heathen could say, virtue is the only and true nobility. But never does virtue better merit the name, never does she appear more noble, than when, for public good, she encounters danger, struggles with difficulties, overcomes opposition, endures pain and reproach, and renounces ease, wealth, pleasure, honour, and every private interest. Self-denial is the school, and the touch-stone of true and heroic elevation of spirit. It discovers what great things can be done by a steady principle of piety and benevolence, animated by the hopes of a better world. The unsullied purity, and the active and extensive benevolence of Christ would have indicated greatness of soul, had he appeared in

the outward splendour of a Solomon. If the princes of the earth are great, when they employ their authority and power, for diffusing happiness among those whom they govern, how great is he whose business and joy it was to give eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, health to the diseased, life to the dead, instruction to the ignorant, virtue to the profligates. Still, however, to his benevolent heart, all this, instead of displaying self-denial, would have been easy and agreeable. But when I see the Son of God from choice, not necessity, humbling himself, and taking on him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that through his abasement and suffering, God's glory might be great in man's salvation; I discern a transcendent greatness in these acts of condescension and abasement, which never had, and never can have a parallel. If heroes, who, for the prosperity and safety of their country are admired by their contemporaries, and have monuments erected to transmit their names with honour to latest posterity; how great is his bounty, and how great is his goodness, who voluntarily endured the most exquisite outward and inward sufferings, to restore a world of rebels to the forfeited favour and lost image of God. Such heights of greatness we cannot attain. Yet, while at a humble distance, we contemplate and admire them, our imperfect conformity to the image of Christ, in self-denial, is truly honourable. To rise above self-love, nature, habit, and the strong prejudices which they have confirmed; to fight against the darling deep-rooted inclinations of the human heart, requires a vigour, an exertion, and a labour, in which there will always be
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found true greatness of mind. How is the soul agitated, and the progress of virtue hindered by the disorders of our animal frame! How often are we weak enough to indulge in vices, even while we are conscious of their meanness? How difficult is it to preserve purity of mind amidst the allurements of pleasure, and the evil examples of men in the superior stations of life; in opposition to the influence of those to whom we have been indebted, or of those on whom we depend. If we venerate the warrior who risks death in every form, that he may serve the cause of liberty, of religion, of his king, or of his country; or even who purchases the blessings or the security of an empire, by his blood; let us remember, that he who conquers impetuous passions and appetites, and who forsakes his most favourite indulgences, from the sense of duty, “is better than the mighty;” and “he who ruleth his own spirit, than he who taketh a city.” If you view the self-denial which Christianity prescribes as a mere arbitrary precept, or as a fanatical contempt of innocent and lawful comforts, you will discern no form nor comeliness in it, why it should be desired: But when it is viewed as a strong and invariable attachment to truth and virtue, whatever they cost us, and as a regard to general good, in preference to every private and selfish consideration; the law which requires it, like the God by whom that law is enacted, must appear to be holy, and just, and good.

2. Self-denial naturally conducts men to true greatness. Effeminacy and voluptuousness rust the best talents, blunt the most undaunted courage, pervert the soundest judgment, and corrupt the purest heart. All these qualities of the mind, a habit of self-denial

improves and cultivates. Indeed, even that which the men of the world call greatness, cannot be acquired without a great degree of self-denial. He who would rule well must first be trained to subjection and obedience. Learning is not attained without long perseverance, application, and diligence; and the illustrious Statesman and General are not formed for their situations, without submitting to many hardships, and without both doing and suffering much, in contradiction to their private inclinations. But it is Christian self-denial which renders men truly great. It diffuses happiness, by promoting a conscientious discharge of the general offices of life; and of the duties of every particular rank and station. It restrains the mighty from abusing power; by teaching them to employ it wisely and well, it renders them public benefactors. It teaches the judge to despise the gain of oppression, and to shake his hands from "the holding of bribes." It charges the rich not to waste their wealth in mean and unmanly gratifications; but to be rich in good works, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to relieve the distressed. Under the influence of this principle, the teacher of Christianity "meditates on "divine things, and gives himself wholly to them." "He renounces the hidden things of darkness and "dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every "man's conscience in the sight of God." It animates the soldier to bear hardships, and with fortitude to encounter dangers and death. In domestic life, it prevents idleness and dissipation, promotes harmony, condescension and kindness; and guides
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the rising generation to knowledge and to virtue. In the school of self-denial, the greatest progress is made in wisdom, in piety, in a generous and active benevolence, in all that is truly good. He is great who loves regularity and order, who embraces no opinions, and who forms no schemes without mature deliberation; who loves only that which is truly lovely, who chooses that which is worthy of choice, and who having chosen it, resolutely and steadily pursues it. Self-denial conducts to this greatness. In proportion as the habits of self-government are acquired, and the clamours of passion and appetite are silenced, we learn to listen earnestly and calmly to the voice of truth, to examine its different aspects candidly and fairly, to weigh the evidence which accompanies it impartially, to hearken cheerfully to the calls of duty, and to refuse no sacrifice, which the interest of religion, or the public prosperity can require of us. Unwearied diligence, long-suffering patience, and a resolution not to slacken our efforts on account of difficulties, opposition, or danger, are thus habitually cultivated and increased. Pride, ambition, resentment, avarice, fleshly lusts, war against the soul. The allurements of sense blind and captivate our nobler powers. Self-denial enlightens the soul, frees her from the fetters of corruption, and preserves us from the cowardice of unbelief, from the perfidy of earthly-mindedness, and from every thing else which weakens the mind, or enervates the body. Vicious propensities, not resisted, leave us neither leisure, nor dispositions for great actions. Through self-denial invisible objects are attended to, appear transcendently excellent, and possess their proper influence. Humour, appetite, and worldly interest,

terest, no longer bias and pervert the judgment. Depraved inclinations no longer annihilate evidence where it is; or create it, where it is not. Our enquiries become strict and careful; our inclinations fair and candid; our conduct prudent, steady, and consistent.

3. Self-denial leads to true greatness, as it is accepted and honoured by God. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and with a pleasant countenance beholdeth the upright." They are peculiarly his delight, when, by acts of self-denial, they manifest unconquerable attachment to duty and conscience. Such who thus "honour God, God will honour." Never did any so glorify God by a self-denied obedience, as the Captain of our salvation; and never was any so glorified by God. "He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." In the days of his humiliation the circle of his beneficence was limited. Now it is extended through the whole creation of God. All power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, and the wishes of his generous heart are accomplished in the most distant regions of God's dominions. He who "was despised and rejected of men," is, by glorified saints and angels, admired and adored. A perverse generation endeavoured to bury his name, and to root out his remembrance from the earth. But vain were their efforts. God "gave him a name above every name;" a name which, however great or many the attempts to sully or obscure it, shall last for ever, and be exalted as long as the sun endures. The names of perishing mortals command our respect, even when their me-
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rit little corresponds with the elevation of their rank. What reverence, then, is due to a name, which imports every thing great and good. Indeed, it is respected and loved by all whose eyes the lord of this world hath not blinded. The enemies of this King of glory shall be covered with shame, and on his head shall the crown flourish. His virtues were unparalleled, and so are the honours with which they are recorded. We can equal him in neither; yet we may lawfully aspire after the resemblance of him in both. “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” That Providence, which rewarded the virtue of Joseph with such distinguished honour, can even, in the present life, recompense an hundred-fold, all the losses and reproaches which befall men on account of their fidelity in God’s service. But if the reward should not be visibly obtained in this world, it is enough to be assured that Christ shall give to him who overcometh, to sit down with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and sat down with the Father on his throne. The Christian shall find on the other side of the grave nobler and far more satisfying joys, than any which it was possible for him to renounce in this life from love to God, or from benevolence to men. Instead of the short-lived honours and pleasures he relinquished, fulness of joy, rivers of pleasure for evermore, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away, are his portion in the kingdom of God. They who, in times of general degeneracy, “defile not their garments, shall walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy.” The God in whom they trusted, whose most difficult laws they observed, whose honour was dear to them, and who witnessed and approved the works of their love
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and subjection, shall, by conferring on them glory, honour, and immortality, at last more than satisfy their most enlarged desires. When “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up,” their honour shall not fade, their portion shall not perish; “for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and their God their glory.” God shall openly acknowledge them as his peculiar friends, as the men whom he greatly delights to honour. The artful malice which sometimes insidiously or unjustly charged them with the most atrocious crimes, shall then be put to silence. The malignant world, which could ascribe their best actions to the worst motives, shall then be confounded. “God shall bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day.”

Far different their state who knew no happiness in this life, but that which they derived from the gratification of their sensual appetites; who meanly complied with the humours of the great, or with the manners of the times, however absurd or wicked they were; and who never denied themselves an indulgence, for God, for their brethren of mankind, or for a blessed eternity. Their vile and despicable characters shall then be fully disclosed; their low and mercenary views, even in the actions which had the most specious appearance, shall then be completely detected; and “they shall be an abhorrence of all flesh.”

Display, my brethren, in your personal conduct, such a zeal for God, and such a sense of true greatness, as the view of your suffering Saviour is well calcu-

calculated to inspire. Refuse not this mark of gratitude to Him “who spared not his own Son, but “delivered him up to the death for us all.” Refuse it not to the Saviour, who hath set you so illustrious a pattern of free and generous self-denial, and who will so bountifully reward your humblest imitation of it. Decline not the path, though rough and thorny, which conducts to true and lasting glory. Think what the men of the world have done and suffered from love, from friendship, from gratitude to a fellow-mortal. Then reflect on the tender affection of your Redeemer, and on the blessings purchased for you by his precious blood, and judge if it does not become you, regardless of every difficulty and danger, to maintain your fidelity to your best friend, and resolutely to defend his cause. Be not outdone by those, who exercise so much self-denial to acquire the short-lived honours and pleasures of this world. Think how the wrestlers, and runners in the Olympic games, strained every nerve to gain a little transient admiration and applause. Your prize is infinitely greater. Let not your restraints and sacrifices be less. The more difficulties ye surmount, and the greater the obstacles which ye overcome, the more perfect shall be your joy from the sense of God’s approbation and favour. Openly and explicitly avow your allegiance to Jesus, and your heroic resolution, cost what it may, to cleave to it. Religion requires this, and denounces damnation against the fearful and unbelieving. She promises no triumph without fighting: no prize without running the race. In hearkening to her sacred dictates, despise the reproaches of men who are blind to true excellence, who sell the decisions they pronounce, and who can

both praise the vilest, and censure the most worthy. If the world be often unjust, and wants either understanding to perceive, or honesty to declare, what is laudable, and what is base, let it suffice to you that the Judge of the universe “is not unrighteous to “forget the labour of love” or of self-denial. Happy they who, penetrated with a just sense of the high dignity, and exalted prospects of true Christians, are not to be moved from their integrity, and whose ambition nothing will satisfy but the honour which comes from God. Happy youths, who early tread the paths of self-denial, and watchfully guard their innocence and virtue! The grace which they receive in their youth, habitually exercised, becomes stronger and stronger, and facilitates the discharge of the most difficult duties, in every successive period of their lives. And when “the evil days come, and the “years draw near, of which they shall say they have “no pleasure in them;” it shall be to them no grief of heart, that they devoted to God the flower of their youth, and the vigour of their strength; that they resisted the allurements of pleasure, and spent the active part of life in a self-denying obedience.

May all in this worshipping assembly be thus religious, thus honourable, and thus happy! And for this purpose, may the Holy Ghost subdue in us a selfish and worldly disposition, and that “fear of man “which bringeth a snare:” and bestow upon us “the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound “mind.”

SERMON III.

ON LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION.

REVELATION iii. 15.

I KNOW THY WORKS, THAT THOU ART NEITHER COLD NOR HOT :
I WOULD THOU WERT COLD OR HOT.

THESE were the words of Jesus, “ the Amen, the “ faithful and true witness,” to a set of men, who said, they were “ rich and increased in goods, and “ had need of nothing.” Their profession of religion was conspicuous and splendid. Their fellow-Christians imagined them, and they imagined themselves to be upright in that profession. Meanwhile, He who searcheth the heart, and desireth truth in the inward part, perceives the unsoundness of their character, unveils it before them, and warns them of their dreadful danger. “ I know thy works, that thou “ art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold “ or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and “ neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my “ mouth.” Not he, who commendeth himself, or he, whom a blinded world commendeth, is approved; but he, whom the Lord commendeth. We may deceive others, we may even deceive ourselves, with

a superficial change and a half-reformation ; but God we cannot deceive. If we attempt to compound matters between God and the world ; if we mind religion no farther than our temporal interest allows us, we had as well renounce it altogether. That, through the Divine blessing, I may impress you with a sense of this serious and important truth, I shall, First, describe the temper which our Lord here reproves in the church of Laodicea. Secondly, I shall mention some of the causes from which lukewarmness in religion so generally prevails. And, Thirdly, I shall represent the folly, the guilt, and the danger of indulging such a disposition.

I. I am to represent the temper which our Lord here reproves in the church of Laodicea ; “ Thou art “ lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.”

“ The cold ” are those, who are wholly governed by their vicious passions and appetites, who are proof against conviction, and on whom the truths of religion have no influence. They have no taste for virtue, no sense of God in their hearts, no regard to his authority in their lives, and no concern about the rewards or punishments of another world. If conscience upbraids them, they stifle, by licentious or sceptical principles, the salutary remorse ; deride holiness and piety, as folly and weakness ; and laugh at the terrors of the Lord, as dreams and chimeras. The melting influence of religious truth is excluded from their minds ; and every sentiment of duty or of devotion is chilled and frozen within them.

On the other hand, “ the hot ” are those who are enlightened by divine knowledge, warmed by gracious affections, deeply impressed with gospel truth,
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and chearful in the practice of moral and religious duties. They burn with love and gratitude to their God and Saviour, and with zeal for faith and holiness. They are “baptized with the Holy Ghost as “with fire.” He penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul, refines it from dross and corruption, and transforms it into his own image. His powerful energy kindles and cherishes a sacred flame, which ascends above self and sublunary things, to God and heaven, which never says of any degree of purity, attained on earth, “it is enough;” and which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown.

“The lukewarm” resemble, and yet differ from both the cold and the hot. They are not insensible to the great objects of religion, and profess to believe and honour them. Yet these objects impress them but slightly, and do not reach the bottom of their hearts. They maintain no dangerous heresy, are not infamous for profligacy of manners, and have faint wishes and desires after what is good. But they have no suitable warmth of devotion, and no peremptory and determinate resolution to hold fast faith and a good conscience.

It may be proper more particularly to consider some of the various classes of men, to whom this character belongs, and what are its surest indications, in the defective regards which they express to the faith, the profession, the holiness, the obedience, and the propagation of the Gospel.

1. They are lukewarm, who are at no pains to guard against error, and to acquire just sentiments of religion. The fundamental article of the polite and fashionable creed is, that no article of Christianity is fundamental; and that, whatever men's
faith

faith is, they cannot fall short of the divine favour, if their hearts are good, and their conduct virtuous. But Scripture every where represents the great truths of the Gospel as the sources of holiness. Can then, the heart be good whose natural depravity is not cured by their salutary influence? We are favoured with instructions from heaven, as to the motives, the rule, and the helps of obedience. And is it virtuous conduct to pay no attention to heavenly instructions? We are commanded to try all things, and hold fast that which is good. And doth he not violate that important precept, who leaves his religion to chance; gives himself no trouble to search after truth; and adopts, without evidence, popular, or fashionable opinions? The pure Gospel is the good seed, from which spring up the children of the kingdom, trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, in whom he will be glorified. Dangerous errors are the tares, sown by the enemy of souls; and which produce and strengthen depravity of heart and life. Is it then, a trivial matter, whether the field of the soul be sown with good seed, or with tares? Princes expect regard to their laws from their subjects, and observance of their directions from ambassadors, generals, and all in every department of government. Masters are seldom weak enough to leave it to the direction, or rather to the humour and caprice of their servants, how they shall be served. And will not our absolute Sovereign and Master be provoked, who hath prescribed the worship and obedience which he will accept, when we neglect and transgress his prescriptions? In vain, therefore, they worship, who teach for doctrines the

the commandments of men ^a. They refuse the Ruler of the universe that honour and homage, which he requires ; and, instead of it, arrogantly substitute something different, suggested by humour, folly, or pride. If an angel, who teaches another doctrine than that contained in the Bible, is accursed, the man cannot be blessed, who, through presumption or carelessness, adds to, alters, or diminishes the mystery of godliness, or treats any part of it as an empty, unprofitable speculation.

2. They are lukewarm, who, from worldly hopes or fears, detain in unrighteousness the truth they know, and who will not profess it openly. What God hath joined together, they treacherously put asunder, and flatter themselves, that they have orthodox and pious hearts, though with their mouths they deny the Gospel. By a strange and sacrilegious partition, they would give their sentiments to God, and their tongues to the devil ; favour the cause of Christ in their creeds, and fight against it, or at least not support it, with their active powers. The glorifying of God with their bodies, they decline as unnecessary, though God hath expressly required it ; though he, who created the soul, formed also the body ; and though both were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Had the primitive Christians been thus cowardly, Jewish or heathen darkness would still have covered the earth. And had not the reformers been men of another and a better spirit, the sorceries of mystical Babylon would still have bewitched the British Isles. Such a timid, disguised religion profits not others, and ruins him who relies upon it. We must shew
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^a Mark vii 7.

our faith by our words and works, with the heart believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth making confession unto salvation ^b. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ^c. When God is sincerely adored in the secret sanctuary of the soul, there will also be paid him, in the temple of the body, the public homage of thankfulness and praise. On the other hand, Christ hath threatened, what is not to be heard but with the most solemn attention and awe, “Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven ^d. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels ^e.”

On the same principles, they must be accounted lukewarm, who, when tribulation ariseth because of the word, betrayed by the world’s flatteries or frowns, hold not fast the profession of their faith without wavering. They have light to know the truth, they put their hand to the plough, and seem to begin in the spirit, and to enlist under the banners of the Captain of salvation. But, not having fervour and fortitude enough for resisting in the day of trial, they look back, end in the flesh, cast away their sword and shield, and surrender to the enemy. Allured by worldly prospects, or alarmed by threatened persecution, they forsake the ambassadors of Christ, whose instructions they had for a season attended. The generous Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they

^b Rom. x. 10.^c Matth. xii. 34.^d Matth. x. 33.^e Mark viii. 38.

they had a better and an enduring substance ^f. But the lukewarm, for the sake of present gratifications, would renounce the bread of wisdom, and the wine which she hath mingled; and, for preserving their swine, like the Gadarenes, they would chase away the Saviour. If any man thus draw back, God's soul hath no pleasure in him ^g. He only, who endures to the end, shall be saved ^h. He only, who is faithful to the death, shall receive the crown of life ⁱ.

3. They are lukewarm, who give God the body, but with-hold from him the soul. Satisfied with a lifeless, formal attendance on ordinances, without deriving from them any spiritual improvement, they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him ^j. They sit before God, as his people, and with their mouth shew much love, but their hearts go after their covetousness ^k. Retaining the form of godliness, they remain willing strangers to the power of it; and their devotion is a mere bodily exercise, which profiteth little. They adore without reverence; they confess sin without humility or contrition; they give thanks without gratitude; they pray for things which they do not desire, nay, even for things which they know themselves to hate; and they partake of the Lord's supper without preparation, without spiritual appetite, without a heart-affecting resemblance of the wonders of redeeming love. Considering the great truths of the Gospel, as abstract and uncertain speculations, not as practical principles for impressing the heart and regulating the life, they are not persuaded, by the terrors of the

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Lord,

^f Heb. x. 34.

^g Heb. x. 38.

^h Matth. x. 32.

ⁱ Rev. ii. 10.

^j Matth. xv. 8.

^k Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

Lord, to fly from the wrath to come; they are not led to repentance, by the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering; they are not constrained by the love of Christ, to live to Him who died for them and rose again. Their affections and attachments are no way influenced by the doctrines which they profess. Worship and obedience are no sources of their joy and delight; but a wearisome and unpleasant work, which, if they were not deterred by the dread of future vengeance, they would gladly shake off. And their virtuous actions are performed from instinct, custom, or mercenary views, not from motives truly worthy or religious.

Perhaps, some self-deceiver may fancy himself able to ward off this charge. Methinks, I hear him plead, "My religion is not thus cold and lifeless. I not only hear the word of God, but receive it with joy. I seek God daily. I set a high value on the ordinances of Christ, and I take delight in approaching to God." Alas! this, and a great deal more, is consistent with a lukewarm spirit. A taste for eloquence and good reasoning may be gratified, the imagination may be highly entertained, and the passions may be tenderly moved, by a well composed and pathetic sermon, just as they would be by an interesting play, or history, or romance. Affected by the stile, the voice, and the manner of the preacher, not by the glorious truths of the law or the Gospel, the lukewarm feel no concern, that their corrupt inclinations may be weakened, or that their good dispositions may be strengthened by their attendance on religious ordinances. They desire not the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. Pleased to hear of their duty, they are loth to practise it.

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They are warmed in hearing the word, but not by that spiritual heavenly flame, which engages and animates the true Christian, to love and follow after universal holiness in heart and life.

4. The inactivity of professed Christians is a strong proof that they are lukewarm.—They account it no small merit, that they abstain from gross sins, and are blameless and inoffensive in their general behaviour; though, like the unprofitable servant, they hide their talents in a napkin, or bury them in the earth; and when they have opportunities or advantages for doing good, do it not. If you praise them, what they are not, and what they do not, must be the foundation of the praise bestowed on them. None can justly praise them for what they are; none can tell what they do for God or man; what they undertake for the honour of the church, or for the advancement of religion; or what care they use to enlighten their own understandings, to purify their hearts, or to render themselves patterns to others in good works. Indolence in religion is their reigning character. The veriest trifles divert them from their duties. For neglecting them, the slightest pretence affords them a welcome excuse. They even plume themselves on the prudence and sagacity of not incurring the baneful consequences of vice; while, at the same time, they escape the inconveniences and difficulties of a scrupulous virtue. They hope for the reward of good soldiers of Christ, though they fight not in his cause, because they have not openly enlisted with his enemies. Though they fold their hands, refuse to work, and indulge a spiritual lethargy, they expect a share in the recompense of those, who have borne the burden and

heat of the day. But Jesus hath said, "He that
"is not with me, is against me; and he, that ga-
"thereth not with me, scattereth ^l." It was not
for bearing bad fruit, but for barrenness, that the
sentence was passed on the fig-tree, "cut it down;
"why cumbereth it the ground ^m." He who ne-
glects the duties, which he owes to his friends, to
his family, to his country, to his fellow-men, to the
Author and preserver of life and all its comforts, for-
gets the great end of his being; and allows himself to
sink far below even the brute and inanimate creation,
who fully answer the purposes for which they were
formed. His life is in direct opposition to the design
of the Almighty Ruler of the universe; and there-
fore he can neither be innocent nor safe.

But though inactivity is sufficient to demonstrate
that men are lukewarm, it must not be forgotten,
on the other hand, that activity is by no means a
certain proof that they are not so. The outward
behaviour may be exemplary, when men are not
prompted to the practice of their duties by a pure
heart, a good conscience, or faith unfeigned. The
most splendid performances, unless they flow from
an inward taste and relish for holiness, are no indi-
cations of spiritual warmth. Many, not drawn to
duty by the cords of love, submit to it as a neces-
sary, though an irksome and disagreeable task.
Strangers to the sweet serenity and rapturous joy,
which true Christians taste in honest endeavours
for promoting the glory of God, the prosperity of
mankind, and their own advancement in the spiri-
tual life, they must, however, do something in reli-
gion, for silencing the clamours of conscience, and
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^l Matth. xii. 30.

^m Luke xiii. 7.

for allaying the tempest which Sinai's thunders raise within their breasts. Though their hearts are disaffected to the service of God, yet, as they cannot always find a plausible pretext for declining it, they sometimes set about it, though with little of that life and spirit, which, on other occasions, they remarkably display. But where there is spiritual warmth, Christ's yoke becomes easy, and his burden light; his ways, ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace. It becomes as a man's meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father; and his delight in the law of the Lord effectually reconciles him to all the expence, and labour, and hazard which can ever be attached to a holy life.

5. Many discover their lukewarmness by the limitations, within which they confine their obedience, or by the weakness of their religious affections, when compared with their affections to worldly objects.—Averse to renounce God and heaven, and unwilling to part with the sins which more easily beset them, they wish to compound matters between God and the world, and, if possible, to serve both. Insensible of the extent of that which they owe to God, or how much they have to hope or fear from him, they account much trouble in his service foolish, or useless; ungenerously offer him that, which costs them nothing; and serve him no farther, than their interest, their honour, or their pleasures will allow them. They would gladly purchase a dispensation for neglecting a difficult and expensive duty, or for gratifying their ruling passions. They could bear to be separated, for a little time, from their favourite inclinations; but to cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye, could not be more painful than to
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bid them an eternal adieu ; and therefore they endeavour to please God, and to silence the reproaches of conscience, with less costly sacrifices. Like those, of whom we read, 2 Kings xvii. 33. “ They fear the Lord, and serve their own gods.” Naaman the Syrian promised, 2 Kings v. 17. 18. “ Thy servant “ will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In “ this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when “ my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to “ worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and “ I bow myself in the house of Rimmon ; when I bow “ down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord “ pardon thy servant in this thing.” Herod would have yielded to the remonstrances of John the Baptist, had he not been enticed by the charms of Herodias. And the rich young man was fond to enrol himself a disciple of Jesus, till he heard the trying command, “ Go, sell all that thou hast, and “ give to the poor ;” and then “ he went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions.” Many fancy themselves peculiar favourites of heaven, whose heart is thus divided ; and who, therefore, cannot be approved as faithful men. They know not what it is to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts. Whatever their eyes desire they keep not from them ; neither withhold they their heart from any joy. One appetite they curb, that they may indulge another. Pleasure they renounce for riches, or riches for honour ; but they never sacrifice a darling inclination, or renounce a flattering mercenary scheme, for the glory of God, and the general good of man. At particular seasons, they imagine that they are willing to deny themselves, to take up their cross

cross daily, to forsake all, and to follow Jesus. When trials are at a distance, pride and presumption tell them that they can do all things. When trials approach, their goodness vanishes as the morning cloud and early dew; their fancied strength fails them, and they can do nothing. They seek, but they will not strive, to enter in at the strait gate. They wish to be saved, and even to be religious; but their wishes are too weak for reconciling them to labour, and for overcoming difficulty and opposition. Undaunted resolution, persevering endeavours, and costly sacrifices, are touchstones of virtue, by which they cannot bear to be tried. Their good resolutions are soon forgotten; their efforts, in the work of salvation, are languishing and inconstant; and though their religion restrains, it does not mortify their irregular appetites. It secures them from atrocious and scandalous vice; but hath not sufficient force to produce in them a shining or an exemplary virtue. God hath commanded us to mind religion as our chief business; to walk circumspectly; to avoid every appearance of evil; to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; to do with all our might whatsoever our hands find to do; to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; to abound in every good work, and to press after perfection in holiness. But the lukewarm account these hard sayings. They cannot bear them. Nay, they even censure Christians, who are influenced and governed by them, as righteous overmuch. Criminally modest, where ambition is laudable; and content and at ease, where every thing calls for disquiet and alarm; they aspire not after that change in their character or condition, without which the
joys

joys of heaven must be forfeited, and the pains of hell for ever endured. If impressions, made by the means of grace, or the dispensations of Providence, rouse their sluggish souls to greater earnestness and ardour of desire, and stimulate them for a season to more vigorous exertions; such impressions gradually languish, the purposes and vows excited by them are soon broken; good beginnings are not supported by a stedfast adherence to what is right; and, at best, the struggles against corruption are only supported by fits and starts, and issue in no uniform virtue, and no habitual reformation.

Lukewarmness equally appears from the weakness of religious affections compared with affections to worldly objects. Constrained by the fear of damnation, men may seem to go great lengths in self-denial and mortification, who yet love, desire, and delight in some created enjoyment more than in God; suffer worldly pursuits to engross more of their thoughts and cares, than the means by which they ought either to glorify God, or to attain communion with him and conformity to his blessed image. They are more grieved by worldly disappointments, than by the hidings of God's face, or by the foils they receive from their spiritual enemies, or by their own poor and inferior attainments in the life of holiness. Warm and affecting thoughts of an object, frequently and naturally arising in the soul, are a sure criterion of what it chiefly loves and desires. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is heⁿ." "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit^o." We are not accustomed to think
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ⁿ Prov. xxiii. 7.

^o Rom. viii. 5.

little about things which we highly value, and ardently wish to obtain. It would be impossible for us to forget God, days without number, if we indeed loved him with all the heart and soul, and mind, and strength. Yet, alas! how small a proportion do most men's thoughts of divine things bear to their thoughts of vanity? These last naturally spring up in the breast, and are almost its constant inhabitants. The first are impressed with difficulty, and, as troublesome guests, are soon dismissed. Any thing, however low and trifling, is better suited to entertain, in a leisure hour, than God and Christ, and eternity. Surely the fountain, which thus habitually sends forth bitter and poisonous, not sweet and wholesome streams, must be deeply corrupted and depraved. While "*the hot*" hunger and thirst after righteousness, and pant for God, "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks;" the lukewarm set no bounds to their desires of outward comforts, but, from a low estimate of the pleasures and excellence of religion, think it superfluous to have more of it than is absolutely necessary to secure them from eternal punishment; are little grieved and burdened with their personal imperfections; and if they pray for growth in grace, they pray for it without ardour, without elevation, and without earnestness of spirit.

6. They are lukewarm, who are little affected with the advancement, or the decay of religion, or with that which concerns the common welfare of mankind. The spirit of true Christians is a warm, generous, benevolent spirit. It cherishes every tender, sympathetic feeling; and deeply interests us in the

happiness of others. It imprints on the fleshly tables of the heart, that precept, "Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others ^p." The warm-hearted saint wishes to impart to all around him, his lively sense of divine things, not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved ^q. Just Lot, dwelling among the wicked Sodomites, "In seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds ^r." The devout Psalmist could appeal to the searcher of hearts; "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word." And, again; "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law ^s." Paul, after enumerating his amazing fatigues and sufferings in the cause of Christ, could tell the Corinthians, "Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not ^t?" And the Philippians, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Christ ^u." But with sorrow he beheld a narrow, selfish, interested spirit, so fatally prevailing, that Timothy alone resembled him in anxious solicitude for the salvation of souls: "I have no man, like minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's ^v." Immediately careful of their own safety, in those days of danger, they left the precious souls of others, the rising generation, and the

^p Phil. ii. 4.^q 1 Cor. x. 33.^r 2 Pet. ii. 8.^s Psal. cxix. 158, 136.^t 2 Cor. xi. 28, 29. ^u Phil. i. 8.^v Phil. ii. 20, 21.

the cause of God and religion, to shift for themselves. Many inherit this ignoble, grovelling spirit, little solicitous whether the Gospel prevails, or loses ground; whether vital piety flourishes or decays: They are not “grieved for the afflictions of Joseph,” nor comforted by Zion’s prosperity. If possible, they transfer to others the trouble of planning and executing designs of extensive usefulness. If they are brought to engage in them, it is with difficulty. If they assist in supporting them, it is with reluctance. The little burden, which they bear in promoting them, is by constraint, not willingly. Others, if they chuse, may contribute by their money, labours, or suffering, for sending the Gospel to the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty, or to the multitude in our own land, ready to perish for lack of knowledge. They aspire not after the present honour, or the future reward of saving souls from death, and covering a multitude of sins. They relish not the transporting delight of “turning sinners from the error of their way, giving light to them that sit in darkness, and guiding their feet into the way of peace.” Bold, vigorous, and expensive exertions for averting public calamities, and for promoting the best interests of mankind, some of them even dare to censure, as officious forwardness, and vain ostentation. They selfishly and scornfully ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” and not only refuse to lend any considerable aid to the cause of truth and virtue, but censure and ridicule those, who display, in that cause, greater generosity and zeal.

II. I now proceed to enquire, why a lukewarm spirit so wofully prevails among many, who profess to believe the religion of Jesus.

The gate is strait, the way narrow, that leadeth unto life. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. He, who would not forfeit a blessed immortality, must wrestle, fight the good fight of faith, run with patience the race set before him, and take, as if by violence, the kingdom of heaven. All this the Scriptures plainly declare. How then can men be easy, who have read or heard, and profess to believe declarations so precise and peremptory, and yet are “neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm?”

Strange as this may appear, to account for it is not difficult. Lukewarmness prevails through an evil heart of unbelief. Men profess to believe; men imagine that they believe the threatenings of the law and the promises of the Gospel; who have never considered either their interesting nature or their undoubted certainty.

The impression from visible objects of what is lovely and desirable, or of what is deformed and hateful, naturally influences men's temper and conduct. Bodily pain and pleasure strike the senses so forcibly, that none can doubt their existence, mistake their qualities, or be indifferent to their effects. None, therefore, are cold and sluggish, when a highly valued worldly interest is in manifest hazard. The approach of a dreadful calamity, or the probability of a considerable gain, warms the phlegmatic, and animates the indolent. The mariner ventures the dangers of winds and waves, and hardily endures the fatigues of a tedious voyage, from rational hopes of acquiring wealth in countries far remote, and
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which he never yet saw. If the word preached were mixed with real faith or conviction in them who hear it; with a faith, not only of the reality, but of the importance and glory of the objects revealed; objects, now unseen and future, would, in like manner, captivate the heart, and would produce not only the most earnest desires, but the most strenuous endeavours to attain them. The idea of an eternity of unmixed happiness, or of intolerable anguish, must make a deep impression, if it is really believed to represent the future conditions which are to be the result of the different characters of men. On the other hand, faith's views of Jesus, about to crown the conquering saint, and to admit him to fulness of joy, and to rivers of pleasure for evermore, are surely sufficient to reconcile the mind to all the labours and difficulties, in the way to heaven, and to disarm even death of his terrors. Beholding the wonders of redeeming love, true Christians must despise the frowns and flatteries of this world; and think it impossible to do too much, or to suffer too much for their beloved Saviour. If, in the pursuit of a thousand objects, which merit it infinitely less, men discover all imaginable warmth, courage, and activity, but exert none for their souls or for their salvation; the concerns of eternity must appear to them to be less real and less interesting than their temporal concerns. Strangers *they* must be to holy fervour of spirit, who see not the beauty and glory, and who relish not the pleasures of religion; who talk of treasures in heaven, but view the treasures of this earth as more desirable; and who fondly cherish a secret hope, that God will be less severe on transgressors, than the language of his threatenings supposes;

poses; and that it is at least possible that without either holy dispositions or virtuous exertions, men may at last escape the damnation of hell.

The want of religious principles, ill founded and presumptuous hopes, and that lukewarmness which flows from both, are greatly promoted by bad education, and by bad example. Serious reflection on the labours which must be endured, on the temptations to be conquered, on the graces to be acquired and exercised, and on the duties which must be performed by every true Christian, would go far to teach men the indispensable necessity of holy activity and zeal. But, to such reflections, our youth are too seldom trained. The first and deepest impressions made on their tender minds are often unfavourable to warmth of devotion, and to seriousness and solemnity of spirit. Temptations to indolence, effeminacy, luxury, pomp, and vanity, surround the sons of the great. Habituated, from the first dawnings of reason, to seek happiness in the unbounded gratification of passion or appetite, and to think that they are innocent in indulging it, they are sorrily prepared indeed for submitting, in riper years, to the labour, restraints, and sufferings of a religious life. On many of the daughters of the great, a lesson is early, earnestly, and frequently inculcated, which is just the reverse of that which is given them by the Apostle Peter ^w. Their attention is constantly led to “the ornaments of plaiting of hair, and “putting on of apparel, more than to those of the “hidden man of the heart.” To looks, or shape, or graceful deportment; or to the art of banishing sober thought, by an uninterrupted succession of insipid

^w 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

insipid trifles, much of their study and labour is directed. To receive and return ceremonious visits, to attend plays, assemblies, and card-tables, and to read a succession of romances, are the methods very generally employed to fill up their time. Too many of both sexes are even trained habitually to disguise their real sentiments, and basely to assume the appearance of sentiments remote from the heart. Their looks are constrained to express what is opposite to their inward feelings; and their tongues to speak the language of the courteous, benevolent, and generous, without any pretensions to their amiable temper. If Heathens devoted the bodies, the pretended Christians, who as parents encourage or promote such habits as these, devote the souls of their children to devils, and not to God. They tempt their children as Satan tempted Christ, and in substance say to them, “All these honours, riches, and pleasures, shall the world give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship her.” They talk so coolly of religion, and paint the world’s charms in such flattering colours, that the thoughtless youth, allured and captivated by the fair enchantress, become blind to every motive for loving and serving God; and account devotion a wearisome and disagreeable interruption of their favourite pursuits. We need not be surprised, that wealth or reputation possesses the chief room in their hearts. That, by eminence in their different professions, they may acquire these, no expence is spared to procure them the best instructors, in the arts and sciences. But to train them up for an eternal state, is an object shamefully neglected. To accustom them to repeat a short catechism without understanding it, and to pronounce a form
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of prayer, though without reverence and attention, is thought quite sufficient for guiding them to the acceptable worship of God, and for instructing them in Christian faith and practice. The articles of faith are seldom improved for exciting in them the emotions of esteem or love for God, or Christ, or holiness. Moral instructions are seldom illustrated by striking facts, or enforced by warm addresses to the heart and conscience. Little care is taken to convince young persons setting out in life, how necessary it is, that they subdue their natural inordinate inclinations, withdraw their hearts from the perishing vanities of time and sense, and prefer the service and enjoyment of God to the most exquisite outward satisfactions. Such errors and defects in education naturally result from the character of the parents. If they have no lively impressions of the beauty of holiness, or of the hatefulness of sin, and are themselves strangers to humility, to heavenly-mindedness, to the love of their enemies, and to an habitual sense of God's presence, it cannot be supposed, that they will be successful, or even sincere or diligent, in recommending these qualities or graces to their offspring. The proud, the supercilious, the narrow-spirited, the covetous, will hardly be anxious that their children should love and honour, as partakers of the same common nature, all men, whether of their own or of a distant country, and whether clothed in purple or in rags. Their warnings against "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, "and the pride of life," and their exhortations "to "count all things as loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," are blunted and repelled, while those whom they pretend to warn,

warn, apply to them in their hearts this proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." Many who, with the greatest advantages, and the best prospects of success, might instil into their families just sentiments of religion, have no pleasure in thinking or speaking on that subject; and, unhappily, they devolve on others, a task which they do not themselves relish. Perhaps they devolve it on men of mean talents, of worthless or mercenary dispositions, who, themselves, "need to be taught the "first principles of the oracles of God:" And who, that they may eat a morsel of bread, solicit a trust, which they are incapable of discharging with fidelity: "The blind lead the blind, and both fall into the "ditch." The tutor attempts not to impress his pupils with a sense of religious obligation; to watch over their moral conduct; to restrain them from open vice; or, when necessary, to reprove or correct their improper conduct. He even allows them to waste their precious years in idleness, folly, and dissipation; to form dangerous connections; and to frequent amusements, companies, and places of public resort, where every art is used to put evil for good, and good for evil, darkness for light, and light for darkness. The poison of lukewarmness is plentifully administered, and greedily received, in the years of life, when the mind is most pliable, and the thoughtless youth apprehends no danger from persisting in the path in which his parents and tutors have conducted and walked before him.

The ordinary commerce of the world completes the ruin, which education had begun. The conversation and manners of those whom the young are taught to love, or whose superior age and wisdom they respect,

completely perverts their ideas, their resolutions, and their conduct. Unable to support the thoughts of eternal misery, and yet averse to a holy, a watchful, and a circumspect life, they are fond to persuade themselves, that an easier religion will serve their purpose. Observing, that the greater part of those around them are satisfied with a religion which does not prevent them from adopting the modes and fashions of the times, and that they even consider every thing beyond it as hypocrisy and fanaticism; they are prepared both to receive their opinions and to follow their example as the standards of their Christianity. They were never taught gratefully to admire the adorable perfections and generous love of their God and Saviour; and they first perform with coldness, then neglect, and at last despise all devotional exercises. Amusing books, though very frequently of a pernicious tendency, are more eagerly perused, than the sacred oracles; trifles are more sought and cared for, than the one thing needful; and places of public entertainment are far more steadily frequented, than the house of God. The impressions made by the seducing allurements of sin, and not counteracted by a sense of God or of duty, may produce vigour and activity in the pursuit of temporal advantages, but must produce indifference, if not aversion to the acts of religious worship, and to the practice of solid virtues. When unruly appetite is not tamed; when every inclination is habitually indulged; and when the voice of temptation is willingly listened to; the motions of shame and remorse are more and more weakened, though they cannot be wholly suppressed even by a long course of criminal indulgence. The eager uninterrupted pursuit of business or of pleasure, because common, appears to be
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both innocent and safe. Little or no leisure remains for serious recollection, and the desire of becoming pious daily languishes more and more. Men flatter themselves, that little need be done in religion ; and, therefore, in fact, they every day do less and less. Loose and immoral principles are embraced and defended, because of the sanction they receive from the opinions and examples of the many, or of the wise, or of the great. If conscience remonstrates or accuses, habit or prescription is urged for certain neglects of duty, and general usage is pleaded in favour of rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe.—Vain and ineffectual apology ! The laws of God are older than the transgressions of men. Against moral and religious obligations, there is and there can be no prescription. Sin becomes even more exceeding sinful, when it is committed by men of fine genius, and of bright talents. We have no license from our Ruler and Judge, to follow that capricious guide, which every day gives new counsels, points out opposite paths, and often renounces a lesser folly in order to adopt a greater. The command, “ be not conformed to this world,” is not abrogated. He who lives like the world, must be condemned with the world. He alone is interested in Christ’s merits and in his intercession, who, while in the world, is kept from the evil thereof. Either fashionable Christians, or the writers of the New Testament, are egregiously mistaken. Can we, without absurdity or blasphemy, charge the mistake on those, who wrote “ as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ?” Have we no bibles to consult ? Or hath Christ concealed from us the way to Heaven, that we ask it of men, whose temper and conduct are the

reverse of his, though they call themselves his disciples? Is it right in the sight of God, and best for your own interest, in enquiries concerning what you should do to be saved, to regard the sentiments of wicked, or of weak and at best of imperfect men, more than the decisions of an infallible revelation? Beware, my brethren, lest, resembling the Israelites of old who despised the pleasant land, and believed not God's word, you share in their fate, to whom "the Lord sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest." They had some desires of entering into the earthly Canaan, but they were not forward to get thither by tedious marches, hazardous encounters, or the hardships of hunger and thirst. They imagined, that, if God had intended them good, he would have led them to Canaan in a way more easy and safe. A promise is left us of a better rest; let us be in earnest not only to seek, but to strive and to labour to enter that rest, lest we fall after the same example of unbelief.

I should now, as I proposed,

III. Represent to you the folly, the guilt, and the danger of the lukewarm temper which our Lord reprobated in the church of Laodicea.—But this part of the subject I shall reserve to be illustrated in another discourse.

SER-

SERMON IV.

ON LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION.

REVELATION iii. 15.

I KNOW THY WORKS, THAT THOU ART NEITHER COLD NOR HOT :
I WOULD THOU WERT COLD OR HOT.

I HAVE already from this text endeavoured,

I. To describe the temper which our Lord here reproved in the church of Laodicea. And,

II. To explain some of the causes, from which lukewarmness in religion so generally prevails.—I proceed now,

III. To represent to you the folly, the guilt, and the danger, of the lukewarm temper which our Lord reproved.

The Redeemer, zealous for the glory of God, is highly displeased with a temper and conduct, by which God is so much dishonoured. He hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, but willeth rather that they turn to him and live. The tears which fell from him when foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem,

lem, and the blood which he shed to purchase our redemption, demonstrate, that his love to man's salvation was stronger than death. His heart is not less kind or affectionate, in his present exalted state, than when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. If grief could possibly disturb his fulness of joy in God's presence, nothing would more certainly grieve him than the view of men who enjoy the light of the Gospel, and who call themselves his disciples, provoking, by a lukewarm spirit which they habitually indulge, the just displeasure of God, while they are ruining and degrading their own precious souls. Their character is more absurd and inconsistent, and, in some respects, their state of mind is both more criminal, and more dangerous, than even the conduct of the openly profane : " I would," said our Lord, " thou wert cold or hot."

1. The lukewarm practically deny the excellence and the importance of religion.

Our passions are an useful part of our frame ; and were given us, not to be rooted out, far less to be wasted on vanities and trifles ; but to be employed on objects excellent in themselves, and important to us. The things of God and eternity claim, by their intrinsic worth, our warm affection, fervent zeal, and vigorous exertions : And the excellence of religion, demands all the ardour of which we are capable, and deserves infinitely more. If the Gospel is true, our best religious affections are too feeble, and our most earnest exertions in active duties, or in practical holiness, are too faint for the object we have in view. To be languid in devotion, is to clothe with solemnity our want of devotion. If there is a God who gave us our passions, as well as our
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reason, he expects that our passions and affections, as well as our understandings, shall assist in his service. And, indeed, he well knows, that reason, without the help of affection, would very imperfectly enable us to fulfil our duties, were they ever so clearly set before us. Shall we then satisfy ourselves with a cold or lifeless worship, or with weak and irresolute wishes of becoming what we ought to be? Have we no better sacrifices to present to God? Under the law, he accepted no offerings, deformed with disease or with blemishes; and will he accept from Christians such pitiful and inferior services? Let the prophet Malachi tell ^x: “If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor; will he be pleased with you, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. But cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing. For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” Thy lukewarmness, O sinner, denies the infinite glory and majesty of God, and blasphemously says, “A small degree of affection, honour, and reverence, is enough for God; and it is a little matter, how coldly, or how carelessly he is served.”

If ever we have cause to be warm, surely it is when our highest interests are at stake. God hath commanded us to seek his kingdom and its righteousness, in the first place; to set our highest affections on things above, not on things below; to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. These precepts

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^x Mal. i. 8, 14.

carry their reason in their bosom. And if we act a part in direct opposition to them; if we spend our zeal in pursuit of the fading pleasures, perishing riches, or the short-lived honours of this life, and have none to spare for our souls or for eternity; if we exert ourselves with vigour, when our liberty, our property, or our reputation is attacked, and are cold and unaffected, when we are in hazard of everlasting damnation, our conduct is as absurd as it is irreligious. Unless the chequered, unsatisfying, fleeting enjoyments of time and sense, can better reward our ardour of desire, than fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore; it cannot be wisdom to be more solicitous, what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, than how to escape the wrath of the Almighty God, and how to procure an interest in his favour and friendship. Our Lord's question ^y, is equally pointed and convincing: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Whatever else we gain, if our souls are lost, we are ruined and undone. Joy or ease, while we are exposed to this ruin, is infatuation and madness. The prevention of so dreadful a calamity, is of all things the most necessary and important. A condemned criminal, indifferent whether he shall obtain a pardon, or suffer an ignominious and painful death; one pursued by an enraged enemy with a drawn sword, walking on, heedless and without alarm; are but faint shadows of his stupidity, who finds himself easy, though he is condemned to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, and
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is uncertain if the next moment may not drag him to the place of torment.

2. A lukewarm religion answers no valuable purpose. It is a poor unprofitable thing, which neither obtains the favour of God and peace of mind here, nor the heavenly blessedness hereafter. God, who is a spirit, will be worshipped in spirit and in truth; and will never accept duties or services, which do not come from the heart, however splendid they may seem in the eyes of men. When the lukewarm spread forth their hands, he will hide his eyes from them: Yea, when they make many prayers, he will not hear. They have no better title to heaven, or security from hell, than the profane; and, if they are not utter strangers to reflection, must be of all men the most miserable. Their principles of action are inconsistent. Being neither thoroughly devoted to God, nor altogether willing to renounce his service, one part of their conduct condemns another; the resolutions of one hour are changed or broken the next; and folly and instability mark and dishonour their plans and their whole course of life. They cannot always hide from the conscience, their mean and inconsistent character. Wishing to be holy, and, at the same time, with greater ardour wishing to gratify their inordinate worldly affections, they often feel more exquisite anguish, than the open infidel or debauchee. May I not address such then in the words of Elijah to the Israelites, "How long halt ye between two opinions. "If the Lord be God, follow him: But if Baal, follow him²." If your safety and happiness depend upon God, then, in good earnest, serve him. But, if the devil, the world, and the flesh, can better re-

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² 1 Kings, xviii. 21.

ward your services, honestly declare, that you chuse them for your masters. It is self-tormenting folly to listen only so much to conscience, as to damp and chill your pleasures; and so much to pleasure, as perpetually to disturb your consciences. Destitute of true piety, though possessed of qualities which approach or resemble it, while you lose serenity of mind in this world, you still more certainly lose the kingdom of heaven. Though you abstain from gross sins, if you abound not in the fruits of righteousness; though you perform cheap and easy duties, if you have not a respect to God's commands, however difficult and expensive; though you do the outward act which Christ requires, if you do it not with zeal and chearfulness; Christ, who "knows your works, that you are lukewarm," says expressly, that "he will spue you out of his mouth." You lose the things you have wrought in religion, and fall short of a full reward. Your prayers, your sacraments, your hearing of sermons, your honesty, your courteousness, your beneficence, your diligence in the duties of your station; your reverence and obedience to your superiors, your meekness and gentleness under provocations, aimed at nothing higher than that ye might be seen and praised by men, and being seen and praised by men, they have their reward. Vanity, like the dead fly in the apothecary's ointment, taints and corrupts their fair appearance of piety and virtue. When you present to God your best sacrifices, he, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, will ask, Why comest thou unto me, seeing thy heart is not with me? What thou didst in my worship and service, didst thou do it at all unto me, even unto me?

3. The temper and conduct of the lukewarm is peculiarly base and criminal. It argues the vilest ingratitude. Notwithstanding the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God to a perishing world, the hearts of the lukewarm remain cold and unaffected. They are afraid of doing too much, or of suffering too much for him, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. The Redeemer's love was such, that rather than sinners should perish, he submitted to the persecutions of men, the buffetings of Satan, and the wrath of God. But the man who is lukewarm, indifferent to his interest and glory, is bribed by the mammon of unrighteousness, enticed by sensual pleasure, or dazzled by the transient glare of honour, meanly to betray them. The dog loves his master, and hazards his life to defend him. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But he who is lukewarm, he is so far sunk below brutality, as to feel no habitual or powerful emotions of gratitude to his best Benefactor. Day after day, of the Rock that made him, he is unmindful, and he forgets the God who formed him.

Again, lukewarmness indicates hypocrisy. While God demands an unreserved devotedness to his service, the man who is lukewarm, hopes to impose upon him by a partial obedience; and to obtain the advantages of religion, though he declines its most important obligations. His best dispositions, and the best actions of his life have not sincere religion for their root. He approaches God with less respect, and with less fixedness of thought, than that with which a subject would approach his prince, a servant his master, a soldier his captain; or even than that with which one

friend would address another. When with the mouth he confesses his sins to his offended Sovereign and Judge, and supplicates the inestimable blessings of his favour, his heart feels nothing of what his lips utter, and he wanders at the very moment to his farm or to his merchandize, or, perhaps, to his forbidden pleasures. He is meek, when he is not contradicted; courteous, when he is honoured; liberal, when he is flattered; honest, when he sees it to be for his interest; and temperate and chaste, when he has no temptation to excess or to debauchery. By professing to be something, while yet he is nothing, he lies to the Holy Ghost; and acts as if God either did not perceive, or did not condemn his true character.

Farther, The man who is lukewarm is doubly criminal, in refusing an entire devotedness to God, because he does not question the truth of the Gospel; and has, in some measure, even felt its attractions. He admits the doctrines of redemption and immortality; and yet he is not animated by them to be in earnest in cultivating holiness of heart or life. He knows the extent of the race which Christ hath set before him, and the importance of so running that he may obtain; and yet he stops short, ere he is half way to the goal. He imprisons the truth in unrighteousness; and deliberately commits sins, which he knows to expose him to the righteous judgment of God.

Once more, The man who is lukewarm disgraces the worthy name by which he is called. The sound-hearted Christian holds forth, by a pious and exemplary behaviour, the word of life; and so regulates his practice, that men from it may discern the beauty of holiness, and the efficacy of faith. His light so
shines

shines before men, that others, seeing his good works, glorify his Father which is in heaven. The vices of a heathen or an infidel, reflect no dishonour on the Gospel, and excite no prejudices against it. They are considered as the natural consequences of ignorance and error; and are not imputed to a scheme of doctrine, which infidels openly reject. None are surprised or stumbled at them; and the most impudent are ashamed to plead such a pattern in excuse of their own profligacy. But irregular and licentious behaviour in one, who knows and acknowledges the truth, is viewed as a precedent, which may be lawfully and safely followed. The liberties, of which he makes no scruple, are, for that very reason, concluded not to be incompatible with true piety, and to be authorised, or, at least, permitted by the laws of Christ. Thus one sinner of this class destroys much good; affords a handle to the blasphemies of the profane; strengthens the wicked in their wickedness; and confirms strangers to Christianity in their low and despicable notion of it, as an empty form, unworthy to be contended for; without beauty, or vigour, or life. An innocent creed is unjustly arraigned as the source of disorders, which flowed only from depravity of heart. When men, who call Christ Lord, do not the things which he commands, and are as selfish, covetous, proud, passionate, revengeful, and uncharitable as their neighbours are, much occasion is given to the world to declaim against all appearances of religion, as hypocrisy or delusion. It had, therefore, been better for the public interest, if men, by whom such offences come, had never assumed a religious character. Hence, God charges his ancient people, Ezek. xx. 30.; "As for you, O

“House of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, go
“ye, serve ye every one his idols, if ye will not
“harken unto me; but pollute ye my holy name
“no more, with your gifts and with your idols.”
The idea in that passage, is much the same with the
idea in our text; “I would ye were cold or hot.”
Let not your life be a series of self-contradiction, an
absurd and unnatural mixture of worship to idols
and sacrifice to the true God; of professed loyalty
and allegiance to the Sovereign of the universe, and
a life of rebellion against him. Pretend not to unite
things in their nature incompatible. Be so kind to
my cause, as not to hurt it, by seeming to be its
friends. Deliberately chuse your side, and then
steadily adhere to it. If you will not follow me fully,
abjure your profession; and openly declare your-
selves my enemies. But think not to reconcile what
must ever be irreconcilable, piety and wickedness,
love to God and love to mammon.

4. The lukewarm are not reclaimed without great
difficulty, and they are always waxing worse and
worse, whether it is pride, or self-deceit, or gross
hypocrisy which chiefly prevails in their characters.

Publicans, harlots, and others openly profane, are
more easily convinced of sin, and awakened to a sense
of their miserable condition, and their need of a
Saviour, than self-righteous pharisees. When the
conscience stings like an adder, and bites like a ser-
pent, he who hath committed heinous crimes, finds
his present state insupportable. He sees the evil of
his ways, and his doings which have not been good;
and he loaths and abhors himself in dust and ashes.
His convictions, remorse, self-abasement, anxious
wishes, and humble supplications, often prove the
beginning

beginning “ of repentance unto salvation, not to be “ repented of.” But he who is free from gross sins, who performs easy duties, and who doth not wholly neglect external acts of worship; flatters himself from this, that his state is safe, though the world retains the chief room in his heart; though he leads a soft and effeminate life, and though he scruples not to take liberties in conversation, in business, or in pleasure, which, at least, have the appearance of evil, if they are not positive sins. The little religion, which he mingles with the habits of the worldly mind, silences the clamours of a guilty conscience, fences him against the terrors of another world, and so far blinds his understanding, and prejudices him in his own favour, that he perceives no danger, and indulges himself in a fatal security. The slight impression made upon him by the great truths of revelation, he thinks of as if it were the warmth of affection; his feeble endeavours in religion, as if they were activity and zeal; his faint resistance of temptation, as if it were Christian fortitude. He presumes to offer to God, and hopes God will accept his languid devotion and partial obedience. Comparing himself with many, who are wholly regardless of religion, he flatters himself in his own eyes, and glories, that he is not as other men. And yet, during all the time, his state is more hopeless than theirs. A just representation of their danger may persuade them to repent, who know that they are irreligious. The evidences of religion may convince them, her sacred truths may impress them, her threatnings may alarm them, her kind invitations may allure them, her precious promises may animate them, and fervent piety may thus succeed to cold indifference. But religion

ligion hath already spent and blunted her arrows on the lukewarm, and can propose to them nothing new; nothing of which they have not long imagined themselves persuaded. Habit hath fixed them in a half-sensibility to the truth, and, in a limited regard to their duties. Like packs of wool, or soft earth, which, by half yielding to the cannon ball, which strikes upon them, deaden and render useless the stroke, they, by yielding something, make themselves easy, though they refuse an entire surrender to God. The Gospel hath no saving efficacy, and works no thorough change on their souls. They remain, what they were before, dead in trespasses and sins. Aversion and weariness, in attending the means of grace, prevent their influence in effecting a cure of their peculiar disease, and even transform them into a deadly poison. The formalist, trusting in his insipid lifeless performances, as righteousness, cannot deliver his soul, while there is a lie in his right hand. Or, if the passions of another man are raised even to an extacy in hearing, for example, a pathetic sermon; and, from this circumstance, he dreams that the Holy Spirit breathes upon him; yet, evil inclinations still predominate; and notwithstanding all his fancied experience of religious impressions, he who was unclean, is unclean still. Proudly imagining, that all is right with him, he rejects the counsel of God against himself, and despises the offered Saviour and the offered salvation. Thus it was with the church of the Laodiceans; “Thou sayest I am
 “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of
 “nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretch-
 “ed, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”^a.

Though

^a Rev. iii. 17.

Though destitute of the power of godliness, yet, as their form of it was not sullied with any remarkable error or vice, they hugged themselves in the mistaken opinion, that it would be sufficient to secure their salvation. Or puffed up with a vain conceit of excellence and fulness, where there was real emptiness and misery, they thought that they already possessed faith and holiness ; and therefore sought not to obtain them. Hence, after they had numbered themselves, for a series of years, with the children of God, and enjoyed many distinguished advantages for improvement, they advanced not in the Christian life ; and when, for the time, they ought to have been teachers, they had need that one should have taught them again the first principles of the oracles of God. Having no principle of growth, they were dwarfs in religion, under the best means of nourishment and strength. When assaulted by no violent temptation, men of this character may continue nearly in the same state, without any discernable alteration to the worse. Yet, as they have no root in themselves, when persecution arises because of the word, by and by they are offended ; their profession is dropped ; and what they reckon their graces, wither and decay. Having no heaven-born warmth or courage, they throw down their arms when the enemy appears ; cry for quarter at the first attack ; and consult their safety by some sinful compliances, if not by open apostacy. The corrupt bias of the heart, when unsubdued by grace, naturally tends to, though it doth not always actually issue in avowed impiety and wickedness. When duty and a favourite worldly interest interfere, duty is violated ; the light of conscience presumptuously disregarded ; and the sick-

ly, languishing sense of religion gradually dies. Perhaps you are shocked, my brethren, at the idea of such baseness, and are ready to say, though we should die with Jesus, we will never thus deny him. But remember, to resolve is easy when the danger is, or appears to be distant. Judge what you shall be in a day of fiery trial by what you now are. Slothful indolence, and reluctance to perform ordinary duties, are wretched preparatives for great and costly sacrifices. A divided heart, a heart which prefers not God and Christ and duty to every thing in the world, hath in it seeds of treachery and rebellion, which, when the sun of temptation ariseth, spring up and bring forth fruit unto death. Pretended friends, when prosperity is gone, renounce all appearance of friendship, and commence open enemies. The faith of the lukewarm is a weak and wavering opinion, shaken by the least breath of wind, leaving them to doubt of the most important truths, rejecting when it seems to receive them, and allowing them no influence on the will, the affections, or the conduct. Can we suppose, that men would endure the most exquisite tortures, and resist even unto blood, in maintaining faith and a good conscience, who renounce their virtue on the slightest solicitation? Persecutors need not drag them before their tribunals, and threaten them with cruelties, the mention of which shocks humanity. The world has only to flatter, in order to seduce or entangle them; and its slightest blandishments will hold them fast in the cords of sin.

Equally evident it is, that lukewarmness must greatly increase our natural depravity, when it is accompanied with gross hypocrisy, and with secret
and

and criminal indulgences. When men, instead of curbing and mortifying, follow the impulse of their irregular inclinations, they become more violent and impatient of restraint. Every thing is avoided which demands labour and exertion, or which occasions uneasiness or pain. Duties are first performed without relish, then with aversion, and next, they become an insupportable burden, till, in the end, they are entirely shaken off. The heat of unhallowed desire is never wholly extinguished; and by the least breath of temptation, it kindles into a flame, which often consumes every principle of religion and virtue. Appetite, unaccustomed to obey, usurps an absolute authority, which there remains neither ability nor will to resist. Through the influence of alluring objects, lesser sins are committed, though reason remonstrate, conscience check, and the spirit strive. By long custom, the art is acquired of committing such sins without remorse or shame. Thus, the understanding is more and more blinded, aversion to greater sins by degrees subsides; and the view of them becomes familiar and pleasant. They are, at first ventured upon, then repeated, and at length habitually practised. A spiritual lethargy commences, which conceals from the hypocrite, the hateful nature and dreadful consequences of his vices; and which deludes him with pleasant dreams of safety and happiness. Eternity is banished from his thoughts; and his imagination is filled with flattering images of the vanities of time. The most sacred obligations are violated. Revengeful, dishonest, or impure desires are gratified without scruple. One species of wickedness introduces another. Enslaved and fettered by long continued vicious habits, the sinner

becomes accustomed to his chains ; nay, he is pleased with them, and averse to liberty. Not content with practising, he even commences a patron and champion of the vilest and most shocking enormities. Sophistical arguments are devised for excusing, or at least extenuating all this guilt ; and proving, against reason and scripture, that men may have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their own hearts. Conscience, groaning under the most injurious and ungrateful treatment, and perceiving her complaints disregarded, had spoken, for some time, less frequently, and with a feeble voice. Now, at length, she altogether keeps silence ; and, like a wound seared with a hot iron, occasions no sensation of pain. The anguish, resulting from feelings of guilt, at first exquisite, but gradually become more tolerable, now ceases : so that, without dread or alarm, the madman rushes upon God's spear, and on the thick bosses of his buckler ; and maintains a deceitful tranquillity, though in the most imminent hazard of eternal destruction. The disease of the heart, which, in its first stages, was scarcely perceived and little regarded, now discovers its deadly symptoms, and baffles the power of medicine.

5. Lukewarmness exposes men to the dreadful effects of God's vengeance in temporal judgments, in spiritual plagues, and in eternal destruction.

The ingratitude and hypocrisy of the lukewarm, and the dishonour they do to God, by a practice in direct opposition to their professions, are an insult to the Majesty of heaven, and bring upon them the execution of that awful threatening in the verse following my text, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither

can

can no more bear you, than you can bear the meat and drink, which your stomach nauseates. I will, in a signal and extraordinary manner, shew how much I abhor you. I will give you up, and utterly cast you off, as men cast from them a thing dishonourable and loathsome.

A holy and righteous God treats the lukewarm, as they have treated him. They gave him no indications of a sincere and fervent love; and, though they have ten thousand opportunities, exert no zeal or diligence in his service, and do the little they do in it, with reluctance and aversion. And God, though he may vouchsafe them the common bounties of nature and providence, withholds from them his special favour. Sometimes the secret filthiness, which they artfully endeavoured to conceal, is unveiled; their hypocrisy becomes manifest to all men; and what was done in the chamber is proclaimed on the house-top. The mercies, which they abused, are withdrawn; the light, to which they preferred darkness, is removed; the favours, which would have melted a Sodom into repentance, but which made no impression upon them, are succeeded by awful judgments; and the warnings which they despised, are heard no more. God says unto them; “ye are not my people, and I am not your God.” He takes away from them the Gospel of the kingdom, by permitting damnable heresies, or cruel persecutions to prevail; no longer shields them by his gracious presence and protection; but delivers them up to the will of their enemies, and to desolating strokes. When lukewarmness infected the once flourishing Asiatic churches, apostacy from the faith soon followed, and the Gospel was taken from them, and sent to others who

who would better bring forth the fruits of it. The worldly, proud, and lukewarm Laodicea, not having profited by our Lord's exhortations and threatenings; and, after some transient emotions of remorse, having relapsed into her former lethargy, was visited by God with the furies of war, the desolations of famine, the horrors of earthquakes, and other strokes of vengeance, till she was utterly destroyed. Where once stood that wealthy, beautiful, and populous city, the remains of a poor and pitiful village can hardly be discerned. And, which renders her disgrace and misery doubly deplorable, the absurdities, abominations, and blasphemies of the Alcoran now prevail, where Gospel light formerly shone in its meridian brightness.

The influence of lukewarmness, in increasing moral depravity, is strengthened and accelerated by spiritual judgments. As the lukewarm have forsaken God, God also departs from them. The Holy Spirit, whom they have peculiarly grieved, and against whom they have rebelled, ceases to be a reprover; gradually withdraws those influences, which tended to rouse them to a sense of their danger; leaves them to judicial blindness of mind, and suffers their corruptions to reign and rage uncontrouled: so that, from lukewarmness, they are betrayed into positive acts of sin; from these into vicious habits; and from vicious habits into hardness of heart, which issues in final impenitence and condemnation. Men rebel against the light, and love darkness rather than light, because their hearts and their deeds are evil. God therefore, justly provoked, leaves them to their guilty choice, and no longer, by his providence or grace, restrains the devil, the world, and the flesh from

from infatuating them so; that at length they absurdly believe whatsoever their depravity leads them to relish or to wish for.

Having renounced principles, which are the necessary foundations of checks of conscience, they rush on unalarmed, from one degree of wickedness to another; and regard the worship of God, and works of righteousness, beneficence, and self-government, no farther than decency and character constrain them to regard them. Even these, perhaps, are slighted; and in their gay and dissipated hours, ludicrous representations of the doctrines, offices, and ministers of religion are the seasonings of their social intercourse. They sit in the scorner's chair; enter not into the kingdom of heaven themselves; and those who would enter they hinder. Many scriptures contain the alarming threatenings executed against the lukewarm. “My people would not hearken to
“my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I
“gave them up to their own hearts; and they
“walked in their own counsels ^b. Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might
“be saved, for this cause, God shall send them
“strong delusions, that they should believe a lie;
“that they all might be damned who believed not
“the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness ^c.
“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and
“he shall have more abundantly; but whosoever
“hath not, from him shall be taken away even that
“he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables:
“Because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear
“not, neither do they understand. And in them
“is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By
“hearing

^b Psal. lxxxi, 11, 12.

^c 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

“hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;
 “and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.
 “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their
 “ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have
 “closed; lest at any time they should see with their
 “eyes, and hear with their ears, and should under-
 “stand with their hearts, and should be converted,
 “and I should heal them ^d.” This blindness is the
 more fatal, as men, not perceiving it, are wise in
 their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight,
 even when they draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
 and sin as it were with a cart-rope ^e. Other rods,
 though painful, are often profitable. But this yoke
 of judicial blindness, this withdrawing of the stri-
 vings of the Spirit, though it gives no present pain,
 is the sad forerunner of eternal destruction. Multi-
 tudes, alas! are daily exposing themselves to this
 dreadful judgment: and multitudes who are far
 from being aware of it, it hath already overtaken.

Wretched is the situation of the lukewarm pro-
 fessor of religion, when he clearly perceives the
 approach of the king of terrors. He is driven away
 in his wickedness from all his comforts and from
 every hope. Unwelcome and overwhelming thoughts
 of future vengeance force themselves upon him. He
 is constrained to bid a last and sorrowful farewell to
 friends, and honours, and wealth, and pleasures,
 and every thing which he valued, without the least
 prospect of ever enjoying them again, or of finding
 one portion of other enjoyments to compensate the
 want of them. He dreads the wrath of the God
 whom he never loved. He despairs of that heaven-
 ly blessedness, which he long despised. He trem-
 bles

^d Matt. xiii. 12.—15.^e Isa. v. 18. 21.

bles at the thought, that the hell, which he once derided, shall soon become his deserved portion. He sees, he feels himself on the brink of destruction. The agonies of languishing nature ; anxious wishes, that his life may yet be prolonged ; the certainty that this wish shall not be gratified ; the bitter remembrance of joys gone, never to return ; the apprehension that these are about to be succeeded by inexpressible and never-ceasing pain and sorrow ; form a combination of horrors, which tear and distract his soul. His anguish and perplexity will not permit him to hear the comforts of the Gospel ; and he utterly despairs of the grace, which he has so long allowed himself to turn into wantonness.

But if the approach of death is thus dreadful, how inexpressibly greater must his misery become, when he reaches another world ! Conscience, which here he finds means to lull asleep, there awakes to torment him effectually for his guilt and folly. He laments, too late, his madness, in being only almost persuaded to become a Christian ; and he cannot bear the reflection, that the gates of heaven are for ever shut against him, while he sees them open to others whom he all his life despised as men righteous over-much. Viewing the blessedness which he hath now irrecoverably lost, and the torture and anguish which to all eternity he feels that he must endure, he gnashes his teeth, and frets his soul, and curses himself, and blasphemes his God, and “ lifts up his eyes “ in hell.” He knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will ; and therefore he shall be beaten with many stripes^f. It

† N had

^f Luke xii. 47.

had been better for him not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after he did know it, to have turned from the holy command delivered to him ^s. How will he bear the reproaches of the Saviour, whose name he profaned, and whose religion he dishonoured by his unworthy conduct. “ I raised thee to heaven, by the high privileges and advantages bestowed on thee. Justly, therefore, shalt thou sink to the lowest hell, for thy vile abuse of them. Though Gospel-light shined around thee, thou didst the works of darkness. Depart, therefore, into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Had an avowed enemy, an ignorant idolater, or a blinded Jew, thus affronted me, I could have better borne their insolence, and would have complained of it, and resented it less. But it was thou whom I had lodged in my house, who wast fed at my table, and wast instructed in my mind and will, who liftedst up the heel against me; and, under the mask of affection and regard, didst basely betray my honour and my interests. And now the curse due to such aggravated ingratitude and treachery shall come into thy bowels like water, and like oil into thy bones; and shall be unto thee, as the garment which covered thee, and as a girdle where- with thou shalt be girded continually.” How melancholy is the thought, that some of those who are now hearing me easy and unconcerned, may be in imminent hazard of speedily encountering all this misery and woe!

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WHAT a sorrowful aspect does this subject present to us of the state of the Christian world ! The lukewarm every where abound ; and yet, however numerous, “ Christ will spue them out of his mouth.” Christians, zealous in good earnest for God and religion, are only a small handful of men ; and yet, all, except that small number, are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. For surely, if the lukewarm perish, he who is entirely cold in religious matters, and cares for none of these things, and who bitterly opposes the cause of God, cannot escape the damnation of hell. If he falls short of salvation, who, at least with his body honours God ; shall he obtain it, who honours him neither with body nor soul ; who makes not even the feeblest attempt to discharge the easiest religious and moral obligations ; nay, who lives in open and avowed enmity against the truths and the ways of God.—But I must not enter on so wide a field. My text recalls my attention to the lukewarm. And hath not this character become so common among men of all sorts and stations, that a sense of its sinfulness is well nigh extinguished ? Is not the name of zeal become, with many, a term of reproach ? And is it not esteemed one mark of the liberality of sentiment and improvement of the present age, that they despise and ridicule this quality in their forefathers ? Where now is the fervour of the Apostolic age, or the zeal that distinguished the first beginnings of the reformation ? Some, abundantly zealous for uncertain and intricate speculations, for the little distinctions of their party, and for uninstituted rites and ceremonies,

have little zeal for those fundamental articles of faith, and for that holiness of heart and life, in which all true Christians agree. Many, out of measure, anxious and diligent in contriving and executing plans for their temporal interest, have little solicitude to lay up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may inherit eternal life. To encrease and secure this world's perishing possessions, no opportunity is lost, no advantage is neglected, no probable method of success is left untried. But where is the man, whose ardour to secure salvation, or to improve in holiness, is in any degree proportioned to the worth and excellence of these objects, and to the greatness of his own interest in them? Where is the man, whose concern for the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of mankind, is as warm, tender, and active, as becomes the friend of mankind, the child of God, and the member of the mystical body of Christ? If weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, where is the man, who shall not be found wanting; and whose feelings, desires, and endeavours, fall not short of what they ought to have been. Many, in a transient flash of affection, exclaim; "Blessed is he, who shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven. Lord, evermore, give us this bread. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Many, every morning and evening, formally repeat the petitions, "Thy name be hallowed; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth." But, it is not for working out their salvation, it is not for growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is not for advancing the Redeemer's kingdom, and delivering from the snare of the devil, those led cap-

tive,

tive by him at his will ; that they rack their invention, strain ever nerve, compass sea and land, rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow. Some of us had fathers or grandfathers, who did honour to their profession, by an exemplary and irreproachable behaviour, conformable to the precepts, and animated by the doctrines of our holy religion. They preferred the cause of truth and holiness to their houses, their inheritances, their honours, their friends, and their lives. But could they look down from the realms of bliss, how little would they perceive, in their degenerate offspring, of that which distinguished and ennobled themselves, and which, above all things, they esteemed and loved. A flood of irreligion hath so quenched in us the sacred flame, which burned in their breasts, that only languishing sparks of it now remain. The same good word of God, which warmed their hearts, is still preached ; and, in some places, with greater plainness and energy. But it no longer produces the same effects on our sentiments and dispositions, which it did on theirs. We despise what they valued ; we neglect what they sought after ; we reject what they with joy and gratitude embraced. I need not, however, wonder, that those grovelling souls consider the attainments of past ages as too high and elevated for their ambition, who cherish no solicitude to equal, and feel no shame to see themselves surpassed by Christians in their own times. Have you, my brethren, no acquaintances, who have less leisure, less knowledge, less capacity, fewer helps and advantages than ye possess ; and who yet far outstrip you in reverence for God, in delight in his service, and in a generous concern for the good of civil society, and of the church of Christ ?

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Are there none now hearing me, who have left their first love, and fallen from their first works? Yes, your gold is become dim, and your most fine gold is changed. In the days of your youth, you were glad, when it was said unto you, Let us go up to the house of the Lord. You counted the sabbath a delight, and a day in God's courts better than a thousand. The seasons of retirement, for prayer, meditation, and communing with your own hearts, were your sweetest seasons. Fear of offending God; tenderness for his honour; anxiety to procure his direction, his presence and his blessing in every undertaking; an habitual acknowledgment of him in all your ways; compassion for perishing souls; and ardent longings that they also might become partakers of the grace of life, you then cherished and indulged; and such affections and emotions were your chosen companions, and much respected counsellors, when sitting in the house, when walking by the way, when lying down, and when rising up. But this kindness of your youth, this love of your espousals, when you first followed after the Lord, hath now, as the morning cloud and the early dew, vanished away. Where now is the blessedness of which you once spoke? Alas! Where now are even the breathings after it? How little panting for God, the living God? How little hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Unexpected opportunities vouchsafed you, for the advantage of your own souls, and for doing good to the souls and bodies of others, you have not suitably or earnestly improved. Your light and knowledge may be greater. You may have become better philosophers, and deeper divines; while ye are conscious that ye are more indifferent, and cold-hearted,

ed Christians. Or, if ye are still sometimes warmed, it is not so much by devotion and brotherly love, as by angry and uncharitable contentions.—Besides all this, blindness must in part have befallen that Christian, who doth not see, that much coldness is intermixed even with his most sincere and fervent piety.

How great the love of God! How astonishing the grace of the Redeemer! We are little concerned for the honour of God. Our misery could not impair his happiness; and yet how is God concerned for our welfare! The Son of God would have remained to all eternity blessed in the bosom of the Father, though sinners of the earth had been, as the fallen angels were, reserved, in everlasting chains under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. Jesus might have said; “Shall I, O Father, who never “offended thee, bear the curse due to these hateful “rebels! What do I owe them? What interest have “I in their happiness, that I should purchase it at “so high a price?” But, behold! instead of thus despising their souls, he pities the wretched apostates, who had no love to him, and no pity for themselves. He assumes their nature, he lives, he dies to save them. He welcomes returning backsliders, heals their backslidings, receives them graciously, and turns away his anger from them. What kind methods doth he use, for curing the disease of a lukewarm spirit, of which thousands and ten thousands are sick unto death. How important the benefit of a preached Gospel, which, even when men know so much that it teacheth them nothing new, impresses them more deeply with what they already know! What thanks are due for the institution of
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the Lord's Supper, wherein Christ, as crucified, is evidently set forth before us to kindle in our cold hearts, becoming sentiments of gratitude, to Him who loved us, and redeemed us to God by his blood! Above all, what do we owe to those sufferings and merits, which, in a way consistent with the honour of God's perfections and government, procured the return of the Holy Spirit to the soul, to free it of a distemper, so common, so natural to all men, so fatal in its consequences, and, without the influence of his Almighty power, so utterly incurable! And what do we owe to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who spared not his only begotten and well beloved Son, but delivered him to the death for us all!

More than we owe, we can never pay. If the baseness of our temper and conduct manifests the riches of redeeming grace; the riches of redeeming grace should make us ashamed of that baseness. It should become our habitual enquiry, What shall I render to the Lord for his unspeakable gifts? The lukewarmness, the coldness, the enmity of our hearts, hindered not our offended Sovereign from pitying, and placing his love upon us. To those, who hated him without a cause, the love of Jesus was strong as death. And can we be too deeply affected with such unmerited goodness? Can gratitude rise too high to our generous Benefactor? Can we be too active in his service? Can we suffer too much in his cause? No, my brethren, our utmost eagerness in religion is due to it; and that is not a sober or rational devotion, which is not accompanied with a high and lively exercise of affection. Every thing which proves that where God and religion are concerned, it is unbecoming to think, to speak, or to act coldly,

ly, is equally a proof, that there is the utmost reason and propriety in the fervent warmth and zeal of godly men. I speak of a zeal founded on knowledge, proportioned to the real importance of the objects exciting it, accompanied with brotherly love and charity, tempered with moderation, and never employing unlawful means for accomplishing even the best ends.

If a lukewarm spirit is so criminal and dangerous, we had need to beware of encouraging it in those around us; and the rather, because we are in no small danger of doing this, when we least intend it. Fierce contention for what hath little tendency to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind, is so foolish and hurtful among religious men, that it naturally tempts others to the opposite extreme of censuring all zeal for religion, as blind and undiscerning. The keenness which some men discover, in favour of human inventions in worship; or of intricate speculations, about which Christians, equally wise and good, have been divided, and are likely to remain so; gives bad men a pretence which they eagerly lay hold of, for inveighing against that zeal in maintaining Gospel truth and holiness, which are essential ingredients in the Christian character. It is imprudent and pernicious, as well as impious to talk wickedly for God, and to speak deceitfully for the Almighty. Christianity loses more than she gains, when men employ, in the cause of heaven, the artillery of hell. Both the honour and the interest of Protestantism suffer, when her pretended or deluded friends have recourse, in her support, to destructive riots, causeless rebellion, or cruel persecution. Let us leave these unhallowed

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weapons, and all the mean arts of imposture and fraud, to that absurd and idolatrous system, which needs such methods, for gaining and retaining proselytes; which hath often employed them; and which even deems the use of them meritorious. I hope, my dear hearers, you have not so learned Christ. If you are indeed desirous to strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die; if you wish to warm the hearts, and excite the endeavours of your fellow-Christians; be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Let not your good be evil spoken of. Remember, that the laws of heaven give no license to do evil, that good may come; and, that the wrath, the folly, or the wickedness of man, worketh not the righteousness of God.

But, while you would guard against spreading lukewarmness among others, watch over your own spirits, lest they should be infected with it. Avoid whatever tends to abate religious affections, to blunt the tenderness of the conscience, or to slacken your diligence in holy obedience. Beware of the first beginnings of spiritual languor; lest, gradually increasing, they should, at last, extinguish your remaining fervour, and plunge you into the deplorable situation of the Laodicean church. Venture on nothing, the lawfulness of which appears to you doubtful. Often review your temper and conduct, that any weakness or disease, being easily perceived, may the more easily be healed. When you discover, that your hearts have in any degree departed from God, stop short, remember from whence you have fallen, and repent. Search into the cause of the evil, that, where your danger is most threatening, your caution may be greatest. Revive, by frequent and serious meditation,
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your languishing impressions of the great truths of the law and of the Gospel ; that the weight and force with which they come upon you, may, in some measure, answer their greatness and importance. Let these truths be a sign upon your hands, and for a memorial between your eyes ; and engrave them deep on the fleshly tables of your hearts.

I conclude, with addressing those, who have hitherto indulged a lukewarm temper. Too long have you been slothful and indolent about the concerns of eternity. Multitudes, undone by this cold and spiritless Christianity, now lament it when it is too late. Some years ago, they as little dreaded, as you now dread, being cast into the place of torment. You now walk in the same fatal path in which they walked. Your time to escape from it is short and uncertain, swiftly flies away, and soon shall be irrecoverably gone. Awake, therefore, O sleeper, and call upon thy God. Take warning ; double thy diligence ; and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might ; for there is no work, nor labour, nor device in the grave, whether thou hastenest. Suffer no longer the cares or pleasures of this fleeting life, to seduce thy heart from God. Live in a constant expectation of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ. Esteem the company of serious, warm-hearted Christians: Perhaps, from them, ye may catch some portion of the heavenly flame. Attentively consider the motives to holy zeal and activity, contained in the sacred writings, and often enforced in sermons. Above all, buy of Christ eye-salve, that ye may see ; and gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich. Seek wisdom from him who teaches as never man taught, to discern your state, your duty, and your danger ;

and entreat him to enrich your indigent souls, with the precious graces of his spirit. While yet there is access to the mercy-seat, let every one of you present before it earnest supplications : “ O thou, who hast
 “ the hearts of all men in thy hand, and canst turn
 “ them which way thou wilt, as the rivers of water,
 “ by thy grace and power enable me to love thee,
 “ with all my heart, and mind, and strength. Put
 “ quickening virtue into the means of grace, that
 “ my dead soul may yet be animated with holy fer-
 “ vour, through Christ living in me. Produce in
 “ me a firm assent to revealed truth ; and impress me
 “ with a suitable sense of its excellence and glory.”
 Never cease thus to plead at the throne of mercy, till all your request is granted. If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom ; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding^h. For, therefore, will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you : for the Lord is a God of judgment ; blessed are all they that wait for himⁱ.

SERMON

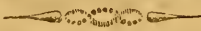
^h Prov. ii. 3. 6.

ⁱ Isa. xxx. 18.

SERMON V.



ON PUBLIC SPIRIT.



PHILIPPIANS ii. 21.

FOR ALL SEEK THEIR OWN; NOT THE THINGS WHICH ARE JESUS
CHRIST'S.

THE great and growing depravity of manners in this city, especially among those of the lower ranks, hath occasioned, some months ago, the institution of a society ^a, for opposing, by the gentle methods of instruction and persuasion, the progress of so threatening an evil.

With this laudable view, they have established a catechetical exercise every Lord's-day evening, for communicating the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion to the poor, and to their children, which is well attended, and promises to produce very desirable effects. They partly give, and partly lend, under the inspection of a Committee, Bibles and small tracts on morals and religion. They intend to request ministers in this city and neighbourhood to preach sermons once a quarter, particularly directed against the prevailing vices of the times.

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^a Preached before the Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor.

The honourable the Magistrates and Town-council have allowed them the use of this church on these occasions. The annual subscriptions of members of the Society, the donations and legacies of well-wishers to the design, and the collections at the quarterly sermons, are their only funds.

Having been asked to preach an introductory sermon, I thought no subject better calculated to procure attention to this infant institution, and to other plans of like extensive usefulness, than the duty of public spirit, and of anxious concern for the flourishing state of religion and virtue. The excellency and importance of such a temper, and the meanness and guilt of an opposite character, is one of the lessons inculcated in the words I have now read: "For all
" seek their own; not the things which are Jesus
" Christ's."

The favourable mention Paul elsewhere makes of Epaphroditus, Barnabas, Titus, Tychicus, and others, sufficiently proves, that he could not mean to include in this censure all his fellow-labourers in the work of the Gospel. It must undoubtedly be confined to those of them who were then at Rome, and who were to remain there after Epaphroditus was to set out from that city for Philippi. Even them he meant not to charge as wholly governed by a worldly and selfish spirit, and altogether regardless of the cause of Christ. He only intimates, that their disposition to sacrifice ease, and pleasure, and interest, and honour, to the glory of God and to the good of souls, was less strong, steady, and conspicuous, than that of the generous, active, and self-denied Timothy; and that, therefore, in difficult and dangerous services, he would not repose the same confidence in them as in that disciple.

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In discoursing from these words, I shall, *First*, set before you the guilt and danger of a narrow, selfish, and interested temper : *Secondly*, I shall shew the inconsistency of their character with Christianity, who are little concerned whether religion flourishes or decays ; and I shall conclude with addresses to the friends and opposers of religion, suitable to the occasion of our meeting together at this time.

I. I shall set before you the guilt and danger of a narrow, selfish, and interested temper.

Many, to whose services no man or community was ever obliged, and who feel little pain from the wrongs done either to the public or to individuals, regard themselves, and are even considered by others, as harmless, innocent, good sort of people ; because they commit no gross acts of deceit or injustice. Their pretensions to goodness are wholly founded on the things which they do not : And their only virtue is derived from their determination to avoid the crimes, which, if known, would expose them, perhaps, to the sentence of the law ; and certainly to general contempt or hatred. If they can live at their ease, gratify their passions and appetites, and walk without restraint, wherever their fancy or their humour point out the way, they are not solicitous whether others around them are happy or are miserable. For themselves they apprehend they were born ; to themselves they live ; by selfish pursuits they are engrossed ; and nothing seriously affects them in which their own interest or their honour, or their pleasure is not concerned.

To instigate mankind to mutual offices of kindness, God hath made of one blood all the nations
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that dwell on the face of the earth ; implanted in them a love to society, and a principle of compassion ; afforded them greater or less advantages for promoting the welfare of their fellow-men ; and so placed them, that they often and greatly need one another's help, and can enjoy through life no tolerable degree of comfort without an exchange of kind offices. If the fitness of the eye for seeing, and of the ear for hearing, sufficiently indicates the uses for which those organs were created ; surely the circumstances, in which man is placed, and the powers and inclinations with which he is furnished, are the voice of nature, or rather of nature's God, calling us to an active benevolence. Comply with the reasonable demand. Answer the end of thy creation. Improve thy talents for the purposes for which they were bestowed. Rebel not against thy Maker, by neglecting the duties of the post in which he hath fixed thee. Let not thy abilities and opportunities for rescuing others from wretchedness demand thy friendly exertions, and demand them in vain.

Indeed, selfishness, by deviating from the paths of nature and duty, defeats her own ends. We are protected by the state, and must share in its prosperity or ruin. Our happiness cannot be secured, unless by means of society and of civil government ; and were every one to act for himself in defiance of others, society would be dissolved, and jealousy and suspicion would universally predominate. Men of the most eminent talents would be useless cyphers among their brethren ; and when the most dreadful dangers threatened the common interest, would not exert themselves to guard against, or to repel them. The leaky ship must sink, when those who should be at
work

work to empty and repair her, lie asleep, every one in his own cabin, as if no individual were concerned in the event.

But if it could be supposed, that a selfish spirit did not hurt the public prosperity, in which the interest of every individual is involved, it must, on other accounts, entail wretchedness wherever it prevails. The generous heart, anxious for the good of others, by the force of sympathy, shares in their felicity; and its enjoyments extend wherever good is known to be diffused. Benevolence gives men a pleasure in rejoicing with them that rejoice, and a relief in weeping with them that weep. No tears have a larger mixture of joy, than tears of compassion. But how transporting the delight which springs from seeing the prosperity of others, and contributing to promote that prosperity. David well knew how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, among whom there is no contention but who shall best advance another's happiness: And Paul appeals to the Philippians for the reality and greatness of "the comforts in love." But a selfish spirit wrapped up within its own folds, is incapable of being easy or satisfied. The history of Cain teaches us, that he who is indifferent to the welfare of his brethren, will hardly scruple, when solicited by avarice or ambition, or pushed on by envy or malignity, to blacken the character of his neighbour, to invade his property, or even to imbrue his hands in his blood. At least, it is obvious, that the envious man, fretted and galled by the superior acquisitions and honours of other men, allows himself to think and act as if he had suffered some personal injury, or as if he had lost that which they have gained.

Add to this, that we all stand in need of favours from others, and none bid so fair for receiving them as generous and open-hearted men. If some maliciously detract from their merit, and seek to deprive them of the rewards which are due to it, there are others, on whose good will and assistance, they may rest secure. For a good man, some would even dare to die. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth others, shall be watered also himself. But general disregard and contempt is the just portion of him who minds only his own things. Whatever degree of wealth he possesses, there are many calamities under which he can procure no relief to himself, and under the pressure of which he must be extremely miserable, unless he is assisted by those whom he has neglected or despised. If they prove kind to him, the reflection of their undeserved kindness tortures the pride of his heart. I must now be indebted to one, he will say to himself, to whom, in like circumstances, I would never have afforded the least help or consolation. On the other hand, if he shall meet with no sympathy, who is conscious that he hath never shewn sympathy to others, he may say in the bitterness of his heart, like Adonibezek, "As I have done, so hath God requited me."

From these topics, heathen moralists were accustomed to arraign a selfish temper. But its inconsistency with the religion of Jesus appears at first sight.

The first and great commandment of the Christian law is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. If we love God we delight in the happiness of the Divine nature, and in
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the glory which accrues to God from the happiness imparted to his creatures. Thus the sweet singer of Israel says : The glory of the Lord endureth for ever : The Lord will rejoice in all his works : My meditation of him shall be sweet : My soul shall be glad in the Lord. If we love God, we esteem the whole of his revealed character. We love him not only as a Being of Almighty power, unerring wisdom, spotless purity, and impartial justice ; but as one who is good and doeth good, and whose tender mercies are over all his other works. We admire, we delight in him, as the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. In loving God, we love goodness and mercy, and hate that selfishness which is opposite to them. He who needeth none of his creatures, has been to all of them liberal and kind. He maketh his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and causeth his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust.

We indulge an opposite spirit to this, and we even arraign this free and diffusive goodness, when we care only for ourselves, or for our own families, and feel no bowels of compassion for a necessitous brother. God will have mercy and not sacrifice, and shews so much regard to his creatures in distress, that, rather than acts of pity should be neglected, he dispenses for a time, even with the strict performance of the homage due to himself. And surely, they have no proper impressions of his character, who decline for the public good, a small degree of fatigue, or a small expence of wealth or labour.

The second commandment, like to the first in excellence and importance, is this, Thou shalt love thy

neighbour as thyself. Now, love not only worketh no ill to our neighbour, and forbears every species of injuries ; but it teaches men to be kind and compassionate, willing to distribute, ready to communicate, forward to mitigate or to relieve the distress of the afflicted ; to do in every case to others, as they would wish, that they, in like circumstances, should do to them. He who regards another with affection or tenderness, when he sees him rushing headlong into the greatest danger, must feel a deep concern, and must be prepared to use his best endeavours to avert from him the evil.

Once more : He alone is a Christian who hath imbibed the temper, and who copies after the example of Jesus. The mind is in him which was in Christ : and he walks as Christ also walked. Now, the character of our Lord was, that he went about doing good. The great things he suffered from ardent zeal for the good of mankind, are the chief and most important facts in the history of the Gospel. And they are related not only to encourage our faith, but to animate us to walk in love, as Christ also loved us. We should be ashamed to call ourselves the disciples of Jesus, if we are unconcerned about the welfare of our fellow-men, and if it is difficult to engage us in any proper efforts for promoting it.

He must be an undutiful son who can patiently see his parent insulted. History records, that, by the strength of natural affection, the dumb son of Cræsus was enabled to speak. Loyalty to a prince, ought to be most conspicuously shewn when his just rights and prerogatives are invaded, and when his lawful authority is opposed. And is it not then time for the subjects of the Lord to exert themselves for God,
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when multitudes around them openly and deliberately forsake him. A contrary conduct will infallibly expose them to that dreadful curse denounced (Judg. v. 23.) against those who will not give their help to the cause of God.

The happiness of men is greatly promoted when those in public offices, not corrupted by self-interest, not terrified by the frowns of the great, or the clamours of the people ; not perverted by private affection ; not retarded by carelessness or indolence ; are diligent and conscientious in discharging the trust committed to them by their king or their country. This, however, cannot be expected, when those who recommend to, or hold such offices, bribed by gifts or promises, sell the public interest for their own, or pay the debts of friendship, or of gratitude, by advancing to important situations of trust, the weak, or the unworthy. Men of virtue and abilities insult the public interest, if their love of ease or of retirement, tempts them to reject or to avoid the opportunities of promoting it ; especially when there is a danger, lest those who are advanced to the situations of which they decline the acceptance, shall be men whose inferior talents incapacitate them for real or extensive usefulness, or, whose want of integrity will often determine them to abuse their authority, and unworthily to employ it for the protection of evil doers, or for the terror of those who do well.

II. But there are others who value themselves on their benevolence and public spirit, who yet look not on the things of Christ Jesus, and who are little concerned whether religion shall flourish or decay. Let

us survey the inconsistency of their indifference with genuine Christianity.

1. The true Christian lives to God, and the glory of God is the great end of his life. Certainly, that glory cannot be dear to those who feel no painful emotions, when by heaven-daring offences, the laws of God are trampled under foot. Does the profane swearer openly affront the majesty of heaven, and defy the power of the omnipotent God? Does the sabbath-breaker insolently alienate the Lord's day to the public service of sin and Satan? And do the drunkard and the unclean glory in their shame? Their regard to the honour of God must be cold and feeble indeed, who, in such circumstances, will not rise up for him against the evil-doers, and stand up for him against the workers of iniquity.

2. Christians are related to Jesus as those whom he hath purchased by his blood, and who are the subjects of his government. To turn men away from their iniquities; or, in other terms, to reform by his word and Spirit, their hearts and lives, was one great end of his incarnation and obedience unto death. And dost thou esteem the name of a Reformer a reproach, and account it dishonourable to be a worker together with the Saviour? Say not, the spiritual state of my neighbour is no interest of mine, and I do not wish to do any thing by which I may be thought an impertinent intermeddler. Certainly thou art more bound to endeavour to reform others, or to save them, when God vouchsafes thee opportunities and advantages for attempting such a service, than the Son of God was originally bound to undertake thy redemption, or salvation. He would have been happy though thou hadst been miserable;

serable; and he might, without wronging thee, have declined the arduous work of rescuing thee from misery. If he *had* declined it, thy case must have been desperate indeed. Surely it is no great thing to go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach, when he, for thy sake, was despised and rejected of men. Though he did no sin; yet, rather than that thou shouldest perish, he submitted to be numbered with transgressors. Notwithstanding this, lest the sons of malice and wickedness should fix on thee some odious epithet, thou shunnest to appear in thy Master's cause, as if thou wert ashamed of him, or wert afraid in the exercise of thy proper duty, to trust him with thy character or thy interest. Thou art not right-hearted, Christian, unless the love of Christ constrains thee to live, not to thyself, but to Him who died for thee, and who rose again.

3. An habitual regard to the happiness of individuals, ought to determine a Christian to make the most vigorous exertions for promoting the kingdom of Christ.—Though the secure sinner loves not to be alarmed, yet, to rouse him from his lethargy, is a most friendly office. If he shall be permitted to sleep on, he must infallibly at length awake in everlasting burnings. Many esteem those to be their enemies who tell them the truth; and the most friendly endeavours to curb licentiousness are often regarded as officious encroachments upon private liberty. But to connive at vice, and to suffer men to run on in the broad way which leadeth to destruction, is a cruel and destructive tenderness. And a liberty to be mad, and to be miserable, is indeed a sorry privilege. Better is open rebuke than that

secret love which tries nothing for preventing another's ruin ^b. And he, in the eyes of God, hates his brother in his heart, who does not rebuke him, but suffers sin upon him ^c. If you saw a neighbour whom you sincerely loved, leaping thoughtlessly on the brink of a precipice, or attempting to be his own executioner; affection would constrain you to hasten to his relief. And surely, when, by persisting in impenitence and unbelief, the hazard which another runs is unspeakably greater, his humanity must be well nigh extinguished, who knows what will be the consequence, and yet will not interpose, when there is a possibility of preventing it. Hate not then him who reproveth in the gate, O ye who are going on in a way that is not good! He deserves at your hands the warmest returns of gratitude. I am not now calling you to love them who hate you; I only caution you not to hate them who tenderly love you. If, from pity to your perishing souls, they would gladly pull you as brands out of the burning; forgive them this wrong. View their warnings now as you shall certainly view them at last, when the judgment shall begin, and the books shall be opened.

4. A serious concern for the public welfare leads the Christian to be deeply affected with the state of religion. Union, justice, industry, and fortitude, those great pillars of national happiness, have their firmest foundation in religious principle. Pride and ambition are frequent springs of causeless and fierce debates, and under their baneful influence, the best and wisest schemes are warmly opposed, because another had the honour of suggesting them. Such
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^b Prov. xxvii. 5.

^c Lev. xvii. 17.

evils as these will cease when the heart is not haughty, and the eyes are not lofty, and when men exercise not themselves in great matters, nor in things too high for them. He that hath learned to do to others as he would that they should do unto him, and to render to all their due, honour to whom honour, tribute to whom tribute, fear or respect, to whom fear and respect are due, will never, by fraud or violence, disturb the peace of human society. Religion suffers not men to be slothful in their business, and it reconciles them to the labours, the dangers, and the sufferings of their several callings. Fortitude is the genuine offspring of trust in God. And the courage which flows from lower principles is the courage of a madman, rather than of a rational being. Christianity never taught a prince oppression, or a subject faction and unprovoked rebellion. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. He who devoutly loves and adores Infinite Goodness, will study to resemble it in being good, and doing good. Sin corrupts the integrity, and impairs the prudence of counsellors; it renders subjects impatient under the necessary restraints of law and government; and by corrupting and enervating a people, it makes them an easy prey to a foreign enemy. The zealous friends of religion, on the other hand, are the chariots and horsemen of Israel, both the ornament and defence of their country. Their influence and their example are blessings to the public, and their prayers will often turn away the wrath of God from a guilty land. If God rules among the nations, and their prosperity depends on

his favour, surely, to despise his authority and his laws, must be the ruin of any people. Profaneness and debauchery, the usual consequences of irreligion, open a wide gap for desolating calamities to enter in and overflow a country : and while they dissipate, effeminate, and debase a nation, provoke the offended sovereign of heaven, by the stroke of vengeance to hasten its fall.

5. Those who are deeply concerned for the Redeemer's kingdom, and who zealously endeavour to advance it, take the surest method of promoting their own personal interest. Them that honour God and religion, God will honour. But those who despise him, shall be lightly esteemed. Though those who sincerely seek to promote the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may sometimes labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought; and though a perverse and incorrigible generation may requite their endeavours with contempt and reproach; God will, notwithstanding, graciously accept and reward them. The lovers of Zion shall prosper; they have already the heaven-born joy of peace of conscience, and a sense of the divine approbation. All other things needful for their happiness shall be added to them. If their lot in this world is sometimes an afflicted lot, they shall forget their sorrows, and remember them as waters that are past, in that better world, when they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

Imagine not that I have been recommending to you an ideal character. The sacred oracles enjoin no romantic or knight-errant virtue, which, from the innocent feelings of the heart, and the general
state

state of mankind, can seldom if ever be realized. Social and sympathetic are as natural as selfish propensities : and if, through depravity, the first are overcome by the last ; on the other hand, sometimes by grace, and sometimes even by lower principles the last will gain the victory. I call you not for proof of this to remember the former times and the years of many generations. I appeal not to the example of heroes and martyrs, who have resisted even to blood, struggling for the rights and liberties of mankind, or striving against ignorance, error, and sin. A Boyle who gathered such laurels in the field of philosophy, could not, from his knowledge of the world, hope to add to them, or to preserve them, by his zeal for religion. In fact, that zeal provoked the ridicule of profane wits, who might otherwise have been the first to celebrate his discoveries, or his genius. A Hopeton could not aim at honour, by charities so secret, that his left hand knew not what his right hand did ; nor by distributing so liberally to the necessitous, could he aim at encreasing his wealth, or at purchasing any pleasure except that of doing good. A Lady Glenorchy desisted not from seeking, in the first place to promote the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, on account of the charge of moroseness, folly and enthusiasm, which to one of her good sense, cheerfulness, and benevolence, must by itself have been grievous, and could not have been joyous. While the Infirmary remains, the spirited exertions of a Drummond in erecting that house, and of a Hope in unwearied attention to whatever could promote the health of the patients, ought not to be forgotten. The honest and successful efforts of a Walker for the civil and religious interests of this city, and of a

Brown for those of Glasgow, will be long and gratefully remembered.

Nor are all of this noble spirit fallen asleep. The voice of fame, though she praises more freely the dead, who are already dead, than the living who are yet alive, notwithstanding loudly proclaims, that there is one man, whose uniform and steady patriotism no interest has biassed, and no faction has blinded. Monuments more durable than those of brass or marble, shall transmit to distant ages the generous sympathy of another, confined to no country, extending to those whose calamities were occasioned by their crimes, visiting to relieve or alleviate the distress of the gloomy and nauseous dungeon, and even venturing his important life in places of dangerous infection. The eminent commercial talents, and the affluent fortune of a third, are not more known than his liberal donations for providing with faithful and able teachers, those ready to perish for lack of knowledge, in his own country, and in distant lands. Envy, with all her sagacity and spite, has not sufficient effrontery to deny the public spirit and the disinterested religious zeal of some in North Britain, and those too among the wise, the learned, and the honourable. But it might be improper, it is certainly unnecessary, to describe characters read and known of all men. May the Lord make men of this exalted spirit, ten thousand times more numerous than they are ! May they provoke others to emulation, and may the Lord cause their houses to prosper like the house of Obed-Edom !

III. I shall now conclude with some addresses to the friends and to the opposers of religion, suitable to

to the occasion of our meeting at this time.—I hope, I speak to many, in whom a selfish spirit, by the grace of God hath received a deadly wound, and in whose sight the interests of religion are incomparably precious. Manifest the warmth of your desires, by the diligence of your endeavours. Grudge no pains for rescuing sinners from the snare of the devil, who have been led captive by him at his will. It is surely the common interest of those in the highest, in the middle, and in the lowest ranks of life, that their lives and properties shall be safe from assassins, pick-pockets, robbers, and house-breakers; that the honour and virtue of their wives and daughters shall be in no danger from the artifices or villanies of the debauchee; that their rest shall not be disturbed, their windows broken, or, perhaps, their children or servants mortally wounded by the frolics of the drunkard; and that witnesses who have lost by customary swearing, all reverence for the name of God, shall not be thereby prepared for swearing them out of their estates, their characters, or even their lives. Our most valuable earthly blessings must be in continual hazard from injustice, treachery, lewdness, intemperance, and contempt of God; and success in any of these crimes, will naturally embolden men to attempt every other atrocity to which they are inclined; practice, besides, may render them so dexterous, that they may elude the knowledge, and escape the vengeance of the magistrate. Neglecting the public means of instruction on that day which God has publicly set apart for his service, and devoting it to worldly business, to idleness, to amusement, to dissipation, produces that contempt of God and of duty, which extinguishes every sense of moral obligation, and every
scruple

scruple of committing the most atrocious crimes. Christians, though the Son of God needs not your aid, in bringing them under his subjection, yet, for wise reasons, he requires and expects it. He means to put honour upon you, to add to your happiness in co-operating with him, to confound and disgrace the powers of darkness, by making you the instruments of his conquests over them. Hereby he gives you opportunities for exercising and encreasing as well as for manifesting to others, your fervent zeal for his cause, and your desire of avoiding the hurt you did when ye were the slaves of sin and satan. To promote religion and virtue in this lower world, is a design which God had in view from all eternity, and for which the Son of God was born, and lived, and died. It is, therefore, a design which must finally prosper ; for the counsel of God must stand, and he shall do all his pleasure. You can engage in no design so acceptable to God, so profitable to men, and so much for your own honour and interest. Christian, offer thy help to perishing souls though they ask it not. When thy neighbour's house is on fire, thou dost not wait an invitation to extinguish the flames, and if he be fast asleep, thou thinkest it no injury to force open the door and awaken him. Surely, then, the compassion of strong and forcible reasoning is friendly to those, who, by wandering from the path of understanding, remain in the congregation of the dead. Imitate the Apostle of the Gentiles, who, for the salvation of souls, was in watchings often, and in labours, more abundant than all around him. Imitate, my brethren, a greater than Paul, who came to call sinners to repentance. Cheerfully embrace, and watchfully improve, every fit opportunity

portunity of usefulness to souls. Whatever enemies and opposition you have to encounter, and how much soever the profane and the lukewarm may censure and ridicule you, proceed in your benevolent exertions, with manly and persevering courage. Willingly spend and be spent in so good a cause. If, in the depth of their poverty, the churches of Macedonia contributed according to their power, and even beyond it, for the outward relief of the Christians at Jerusalem, it ill becomes those in easier circumstances to grudge to bestow a little of their substance, that Christ's kingdom may be spread, and that the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end, by a change of their sentiments and conduct. Give not over your pious efforts, because among men of all ranks, wickedness prevails. Noah ceased not to preach righteousness, when all flesh had corrupted their way; and the Apostle persisted in recommending the religion of Jesus, when it was every where spoken against. The worse the world is, there is the greater need of zealous efforts for making it better. You discover little friendship for religion, if you fly not to her relief when she is almost ready to expire. It is ungrateful and dastardly not to hasten to her help. She solicits it with dying groans. Let her not solicit it in vain. Despair not of success in pleading so good a cause. They may consider, who are now a rebellious house. Ten righteous persons would have saved a Sodom, and when the decree is gone forth against a profligate people, God may hide those in the day of his anger, who not only sigh and mourn over the abominations of the wicked, but who honestly endeavour to reform them. Or if such are personally involved in public calamities, even that shall work together for their

their good. Fervently implore the blessing of Heaven on your labours. Without this, the wisest plans and the most vigorous efforts must prove ineffectual. Rest not therefore satisfied with planting and watering, but look up to Him who alone can give the increase. Prayers put up in sincere and humble confidence to our Father in heaven, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth, shall come up with acceptance to him. He who taught us these petitions, and who enables us to make the exertions which are suitable to them, never said to his people, seek ye my face in vain. Lay your account with that derision and scorn, which no bold, disinterested, or generous efforts, in behalf of vital practical Christianity, could ever escape. The tongue of slander will throw out the vilest aspersions on those who are zealous in the cause of piety and virtue. Satan, when his kingdom is assaulted, will stir up his agents and emissaries to resist. The sensualist, unwilling to be disturbed in gratifying his lusts, will not be silent. It may be, that difficulties shall be cast in your way, and that prejudices shall arise against you from quarters from which you are least prepared to dread it. But let none of these things move you. Let not the profane be more bold and active in dishonouring God, and in diffusing around them vice and wretchedness, than you are in opposing their pernicious designs. Be ashamed that they should serve the worst of masters more faithfully and steadily than you serve the best. If ye be reproached for doing your duty, happy are ye, for the spirit of God and of glory shall rest upon you, and the time hastens when God will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the

day. Stronger is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.—To the great, much is given, and of them, therefore, the more will be required. God will write it in his book against the men who have the strongest motives and best advantages for pleading his cause, if they shall, with cold indifference, deliberately desert it. It is recorded, to the lasting reproach of the nobles of Tekoah, that they put not their necks to the work of the Lord ^d.

Plead not that your private stations afford you few or no opportunities for advancing the kingdom of Christ, and that, therefore, this matter belongeth not to you.—I acknowledge, public teachers are under the highest obligations, and possess the greatest advantages for promoting reformation, not only by explaining and enforcing moral and social duties, but by preaching that Gospel, the faith of which is the grand mean appointed by God for purifying the heart, for overcoming the world, and for producing holiness of heart and life.—Magistrates too, though they cannot renew the heart, yet, by means of the punishments they are required to inflict, may force profanity to sculk in corners, which otherwise, would walk undisguised in every street.—Through the example and influence of the wealthy and honourable, virtuous conduct may become more fashionable, and the corruption of the rising generation may, in some measure, be prevented. Yet great things have been, and may be done without such special advantages. It was not by noble extraction, it was not by wealth, it was not by the power and influence of office, that, under our own eye, an ANDREW GARDNER, and a WILLIAM DICKSON, not only devised, but executed

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^d Neh. iii. 5.

the liberal things which they accomplished. All may look and speak kindly to the friends of religion and virtue; and wish them good speed. The meanest may do much by a conversation becoming the Gospel, by instructing their own families, and especially (to use the language of Scripture) by giving God no rest till he shall revive decayed religion, and make our Zion a praise in the whole earth. Thanksgivings shall ascend to God through eternal ages, if, by his blessing on your endeavours, even one sinner be reclaimed. Your zeal may stir up others, who have greater advantages for doing good; nay, excited by it, generations yet to come, with greater vigour and better success, may engage in the same blessed service.

But I am afraid that some men, instead of promoting, thwart and hinder the spiritual good of others; and employ their influence and abilities to entice them from duty to sin. They eat the bread of wickedness, and sleep not unless they cause some to fall. Their hearts cannot be at ease, and rest departeth from their eyes till they prevail on others to become as debauched, and as intemperate as themselves. If a companion in wickedness be awakened, and perceive his dangerous situation, they keenly oppose the work of God. When the terrors of the law would arouse the conscience, they affrighten from duty by that fear of man which bringeth a snare. When Jesus draws by the cords of love, they entice by the allurements of pleasure or of interest. —The parent who hath little of the form, and nothing of the power of godliness, begins to chide the serious thoughtfulness of his child. “What! will you
“be always praying and reading and sighing? Think
“you me and thousands more in the road to de-
struction,

“struction, because we choose not to be righteous
“over much. Men may be religious and wise too;
“and the wiser sort of good people think it unnecessary to concern themselves so much about religion.” If this attempt shall not succeed, others will mock and scoff at the youth to whom their language is addressed, so that reproach is ready to break his heart. The man of worldly wisdom tells him, “the body must be minded, the care of your estate and reputation must not be neglected. Excessive sanctity and strictness will hurt your health, or impair your fortune, or disgrace your character.” Those who sit in the chair of the scorner, will ask, with a sneer, “Are you also become one of the holy brethren? Are you simple enough to tremble at the words of a minister, paid for teaching what he is too wise to believe? Your setting up to be thus precise is pride and conceit.” One invites the anxious youth to a gaming table; another to the theatres; a third to the tavern, to benumb, if possible, and stupify his conscience. By all means the Bible, and not only books which treat of the guilt of sin and the terrors of death and hell, but even those which teach salvation through Christ, must be carefully kept out of his way, lest what Jesus and his disciples published to comfort them that mourn, should lead him to despair. It is not impossible, that at length the cursed artifices of these agents for hell may succeed; and he who, for a season, had renounced the pollutions which are in the world, through lust, is again entangled therein, and overcome; so that his last state is worse than his first.— But what shall be the fate of his seducers? I would accost such men as Paul addressed Elymas the sorcerer

cerer, "O full of all subtilty and mischief, thou
"enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to
"pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Is it not
enough that you will not enter into the kingdom of
heaven yourselves? Must you also set yourselves to
hinder them who otherwise would enter? In doing
the work of the devil, have you not cause to dread
his doom? As he told Eve: "Ye shall not surely
"die;" so you insinuate that God hath threatened
what he never meant to inflict, and that sinners
shall have peace though they walk in the imagina-
tions of their own hearts. If any with awakened
consciences, humbled hearts, and enlightened under-
standings, ask the way to Zion, and set their faces
thitherward; the seed of the dragon cast forth a
flood of hellish reasonings and ridicule, to deface
every serious impression, and extinguish all thought-
fulness for an eternal world. Other sins, in malig-
nity, cannot be compared with this. The thief is
an enemy to righteousness, the liar to truth, the
adulterer to chastity, and the malicious to benevo-
lence. But he who withstands and resists the work
of conversion in the soul of another, is at once an
enemy to every virtue, and unites together the guilt
of every sin. It is bad to be profligate thyself. To
resolve to continue profligate is worse. But to en-
tice others to profligacy, and to harden them in im-
penitence, is the very height of impiety. The guilt
of the murderer equals not thine. He kills the body
only: thou destroyest the immortal soul. And shall
not the ruin of souls be required at thine hand? Is
there so much hazard that sinners shall not hasten
fast enough to the mansions of misery, that thou
shouldest thus spur them on to rush on God's spear,
and

and on the thick bosses of his buckler? Methinks I see thy brother, by following thy pernicious counsels, sunk deep in the pit of destruction, and, like the blood of Abel, crying for vengeance against thee. “ My eyes were once open to see my sin and danger. “ My heart was once touched. I was almost persuaded to become a Christian. But lo! this man, “ once my father or my husband, ceased not to ply “ me with his accursed sophistry, till I renounced “ my good resolutions, and returned to my former “ wicked life. I was coming to Christ, but he drew “ me back. Revenge the irreparable injury done “ me; and let the destroyer of my soul be doubly “ destroyed.”

But I cannot conclude without turning from this melancholy scene, and once more addressing you who warmly regard the good of mankind, the interests of your native country, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. To you the oracles of the living God empower me to present other and more comfortable prospects. To you heaven will be doubly sweet, when one and another, who, by the blessing of God on your pious endeavours, have landed in that happy place, shall bless you in the name of the Lord, shall bless your friendly advice, and shall bless the God of Israel who sent you to them. “ Had it not been for you, had it not been “ for the kind office to which the Father of mercies “ prompted you, we had died in our sins, in “ thoughtless security, and must have risen again to “ everlasting shame and contempt. Weeping and “ wailing, and gnashing of teeth had been our portion; nor had we ever learned those songs of praise “ in which our hearts and tongues shall now join “ your

“yours for ever with delightful transport.” Hail! happy, thrice happy day! whose brightness no night shall darken, whose glory no cloud shall obscure! When thousands who, with doubtful anxious thoughts, have often gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed; and ten thousands in this valley of tears unknown, who have reaped the fruit of their labours; shall welcome one another to the mansions of bliss; shall acknowledge themselves indebted to the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit for all they have received or imparted; and shall rejoice in Him who sitteth on the throne, and in the Lamb, as the everlasting fountain of that happiness, which is already begun, and shall never end.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON GOODNESS AND FIDELITY.

PROVERBS xx. 6.

MOST MEN WILL PROCLAIM, EVERY ONE HIS OWN GOODNESS; BUT A FAITHFUL MAN, WHO CAN FIND?

HYPOCRISY in religion is justly deemed a detestable character. None are more despised or blamed, and none better deserve to be so than those, who, though “they profess to honour God, yet in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and “to every good work reprobate.”—But there is another hypocrisy more common in the present age, against which it is of more importance to be cautioned: an hypocrisy, I mean, in moral virtue, and especially in the virtue of a benevolent temper: “Most men will proclaim, every one his own goodness; but a faithful man, who can find?”

In discoursing, therefore, from these words, I shall, in the *First place*, explain what we are to understand by *goodness and a faithful man*: *Next*, I shall enquire what Solomon suggests, when he says, “*A faithful man, who can find?*” And *Lastly*, I shall consider the disposition of *most men to proclaim, every one his own goodness*.

I. I shall

I. I shall explain what we are to understand by *goodness and a faithful man*.

Goodness, in our language, often means the whole of a virtuous or religious temper; but in Scripture it is generally used in a more limited sense to denote good affections, and the proper expressions of them in our conduct. Thus (Psal. xxv. 8.) “Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.” (Psal. cxlv. 9.) “The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his other works.” (Rom. v. 7.) “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die.” Hence, the righteous man is one who is just and honest in his transactions; the good man is one who is friendly and bountiful. (Gal. v. 22.) Goodness is evidently distinguished from other fruits of the Spirit, and therefore signifies one grace only, not the complete Christian character. Peter asks (1 Pet. iii. 13.) “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”—That is, who will find in their heart to injure and persecute those who display in the whole of their lives an obliging and generous spirit? None, surely, but those who are monsters in wickedness; or men miserably blinded by prejudice and passion. Yet, in the next verse, he supposes that the followers of good *might suffer*: not indeed on account of their goodness, but for righteousness’ sake: that is, for their firm adherence to the *cause of truth*, and for the strictness and purity of *their lives*. Goodness, therefore, in my text is kindness; and a *faithful man* is one sincere and steady in goodness, who really feels benevolent affections, and is uniform and constant in the practical exercise of them.

them. Let me now attempt a more minute illustration of this uncommon and lovely character.

1. He is *faithful in goodness*, whose general conduct is kind and beneficent. Remarkable are our Lord's words, (Matt. vii. 16.—20.) “Ye shall know them
“by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns,
“or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bring-
“eth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth
“forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth
“evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth
“good fruit. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know
“them.” Good actions, taken separately, may be accounted for by meaner principles; but a life uniformly good must be animated by this amiable grace.

The man, *faithful in goodness*, is affable and courteous in his ordinary conversation, and never without necessity deliberately says that which may hurt or offend. In his lips is the law of kindness. Wit and humour he cheerfully sacrifices to good nature, and he disdains to purchase the reputation either of talents or vivacity, by exposing to ridicule a man of worth. Often with pleasure he expatiates on the virtues and excellencies of others; and seldom, and with reluctance, allows himself to divulge their follies or their faults. The obliging cheerful manner in which he bestows a gift, doubles its value: and the pain which he discovers when he is constrained to refuse a favour, softens and even sweetens his refusal. By courteous looks, and words, and actions, he reconciles his inferiors and dependents to the meanest and most fatiguing labours; and leads them to admire and to love, where they would otherwise have been prompted to hate or to envy. He commands without arrogance, he obeys without sullen-

ness, he rebukes without acrimony, he punishes with regret. He loves not in word and in speech only; but in deed and in truth. To do good and to communicate, he forgets not. If a brother or a sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, he satisfies not himself with saying, be thou clothed, or be thou filled; but he gives them the things which are needful for the body. He deals his bread to the hungry, and brings the poor that are cast out to his house. When he seeth the naked, he covers them, and hides not himself from his own flesh. While one passes by objects of distress, another looks upon them with a careless indifference; and a third contents himself with faint, short-lived, ineffectual emotions of pity: he, like the good Samaritan, generously and vigorously exerts himself for their relief. He sheweth mercy and lendeth; and that he may have it in his power to abound in charitable offices, he guides his affairs with discretion. Nor is his beneficence confined to his family, to his relations, to those from whom he hath received, or to those from whom he expects benefits. As he hath opportunity he doth good to all men; especially to the household of faith. He hastens to rescue his brother from danger, or to relieve him in his straits. He upholds and supports him when sinking under his losses and burdens. He endeavours to accomplish by his influence, and solicitations, what he cannot do by his own wealth. By his counsels to the doubting and perplexed, darkness becomes light before them, and crooked things are made straight. He is eyes to the blind, and ears to the deaf; and the cause which he knew not he searches out.

Such a man does not withhold his bounty till it is wrung from him by importunity. While others oblige the modest to purchase their favour by tedious and humiliating solicitations, he prevents their blushes and flies to their relief. Prompted by pure and undefiled religion, he visits the widow and the fatherless in their afflictions. Ready to discharge every obligation of charity, willing to gratify every reasonable hope, he waits not for applications in behalf of the distressed. That he may thoroughly discover their situations, and administer to them comfort and aid, he visits the house of sorrow from the impulse of humanity; not from the laws of ceremony, but from the sense of duty. He withholds not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of his hand to do it. When those who need, or those who deserve it, request his help, he saith not go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee, though he hath it by him. Nor are his gifts scanty and penurious. In proportion to his circumstances, they are plentiful and generous. He remembers that to whom much is given, of them the more will be required. His princely and liberal soul deviseth liberal things. It is the study and solicitude of his life to discover the methods which may prove most effectual for advancing the happiness of others, for averting the dangers which threaten them, or for removing, or at least abating their sufferings.

His friendly offices reach men's spiritual, as well as their outward distresses and necessities.—Are they alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts? He neglects no favourable opportunity to set before them the danger of their present state,

and the necessity and excellence of the salvation offered in the Gospel. He adopts the resolution of the penitent prince of Israel : “ I will teach transgressors, O God, thy ways, that sinners may be converted unto thee.” When there is any prospect that his endeavours may prove useful, he exhorts the thoughtless and secure, lest they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin ; reproves his offending brother ; and often with delight he talks to his family, and to his friends, of the wonders and glories of religion, that they may be impressed with that, which of all things lies nearest to his own heart.

Are real christians walking in darkness and seeing no light ? Are they ready to faint through the fierce assaults of their spiritual enemies, and the small portion they possess of spiritual strength ? As a dear child, follower of his God and Saviour, he pours oil into their wounds, comforts them that mourn, strengthens the weak hands, confirms the feeble knees, and says to them that are of a sorrowful heart, Be strong, fear not.

2. He is *faithful in goodness*, whose goodness flows from an inward, a sincere, and a religious principle. Men may bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and have no charity. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) Ambition may produce many benevolent actions, and a natural softness and sweetness of temper may do still more. But goodness sufficiently diffusive in its objects and exercises, can only be the fruit of the Spirit of God ^e. The man faithful in goodness, beholding the glories of that God, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, is changed into the same image from glory to glory.

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^e Gal. v. 22.

He has compassion on his fellow-servants, even as God had pity on him. He accounts all men his brethren, remembering that God hath made of one blood all the nations of men who dwell on the face of the earth.

From an habitual regard to the glory of God, and a genuine benevolence to his fellow-men, he tenderly feels for those who suffer in their good name. He rejoiceth not in iniquity; but rejoiceth in the truth; in the justice of men's religious sentiments, and in the happy influence of these sentiments on their tempers and on their conduct. Gladly would he bury in perpetual oblivion their follies and imperfections, and exhibit all their excellencies in the brightest and most favourable light.

He rejoices with them that rejoice. In perceiving the happiness of others, he often finds an equal, or a superior happiness. To see the necessities of his fellow-men relieved, or their distresses removed; to see the bounties of nature, Providence, or grace, bestowed on his friends, his neighbours, his countrymen, or even on those in the most distant corners of the earth, gives more joy to his heart than ever he received from the most exquisite sensual gratifications. New springs of joy daily open to him, which a stranger to true goodness never tasted. In promoting the welfare of another, he promotes his own. He exults in the prospect of that happy period, when peace shall be within the walls of Zion; and prosperity in all her palaces; and when there shall be nothing to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain. The limits of his native country, or the narrower limits of the political or religious parties, which his countrymen have espoused, are

not permitted to say to his charity, thus far thou shalt go, and no farther. He hath drunk into one spirit, with the Christians of Greece and Asia, in the Apostolic age, who felt a heaven-born delight in relieving the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem ^f.

Are men destitute of food and raiment, or of the means of procuring them? Are they chastened in their beds with the desire of their eyes taken away by a stroke? Is lover and friend removed far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness? Are men, from a state of affluence, reduced to poverty by misfortunes in trade, by fire, by shipwreck, or by the hand of fraud or violence? Are they who fed delicately, desolate in the streets? Or do they who were brought up in scarlet, embrace dung-hills?—His eye affects his heart. The joy of his heart ceaseth: his dance is turned into mourning. His heart is faint, his eyes are dim, he weeps sore in the night, and his tears are on his cheeks. Bitterer still is his sorrow, when he casts his eye on unconverted sinners, destitute of God's favour and image, darkened in their understandings, without an inclination for any thing spiritually good; enslaved to sin and Satan, and every moment exposed to endless misery. He pities them the more, because, though poor, wretched, blind, and naked, they imagine themselves to be rich, and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing; and hence dream of safety, while they are slumbering on the brink of destruction. With wonder and gratitude he recollects the free unmerited grace which interposed for himself in like circumstances, which brought him out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; which

which set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings. He deeply feels for those still in hazard of the evils, from which he is happily secured. He earnestly longs that they also may be delivered from their dangerous condition, and be made partakers of the same grace of life, in which he rejoices.

No difference in sentiment or in character excludes his brethren of mankind from his compassionate regards. Yet his chief affection, and his chief delight are with the saints, those excellent ones of the earth. He loves them with a pure heart fervently. He loves them in truth, for the truth's sake, which is in them, and shall be with them for ever. He is sweetly allured, and powerfully constrained to these tender emotions, by remembering that the Son of God also loved them, and gave himself a sacrifice for them: that they have all one faith, one baptism, and one hope of their calling: and that, through the influence of one Spirit, they are all members of that one mystical body of which Christ is the head.

Is their innocence and virtue blasted by the tongue of slander, under the specious pretext of law and justice? Or are they oppressed or injured? Are men of whom the world is not worthy, treated as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things? Are they, against whom their enemies can find nothing, *save in the matters of their God*, persecuted for righteousness?—When one member thus suffers, all the members suffer with it. The man faithful in goodness weeps with them who weep. He remembers them who are in bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity, as if he suffered in his own body. Like the pious Jews, who sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and weeped, and hanged their harps:

harps on the willows, when they remembered Zion: He says from the bottom of his heart, “ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I forget thy afflicted, distressed citizens, let my right-hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.”

His bowels are also moved within him, and his compassions kindled, when the graces of his fellow-Christians decay and languish; when the things that remain are ready to die, and God appears to have wounded them with the wound of an enemy, and with the chastisements of a cruel one. It is observed of Barnabas, (Acts ii. 25.) that “ When he saw the grace of God, he was glad; for he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.” If a good man rejoices in the triumphs of grace over corruption, he must mourn when corruption gains any advantage over grace. The care of the churches, the care of particular Christians cometh upon him daily. Who is weak, and he is not weak? Who is offended and he burns not? He knows what it is to groan under a body of sin and death; to be deprived of the light of God’s countenance; to be corrected by his own iniquities, and reproved by his own backslidings: and having suffered from indwelling sin, temptation, and desertion, he bears the burdens of others, who thus suffer, mingles his tears with theirs, and tenderly shares in their sorrow.

3. The man *faithful in goodness* is steady, constant, and persevering in doing good. Paul speaks of the labour of love^g. Important services to others often require much of diligence, self-denial, and disinterestedness.

^g 1 Thess. i. 3.

edness. On such occasions though avarice or ambition call another way, or slothfulness whisper in the ear, "Master, spare thyself," he grudges not his time, his labour, or his money, that he may advance the best interests of mankind, and remove or mitigate their distresses.

He does good expecting nothing again. Freely he has received, and freely he gives. His kind offices are not confined to his rich neighbours, who can recompense him; or to public occasions, when they may be seen of men. The poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, partake of his bounty, so secretly conveyed, that even his left hand knoweth not what his right hand doth.

Though his acts of beneficence often meet with base and unworthy returns, he is encouraged by reflecting, that when man is ungrateful, God will reward: that he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord: that whatsoever good thing a man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Prompted by pity, he attempts to recover from the snare of the devil, those who have been taken captive by him at his will. Many a time he sees with regret the bad success of his honest endeavours. He will not, however, on that account relinquish them. With meekness and patience he instructs those that oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. He despairs not of the worst. It may be that they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. God can take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh. They that have erred in spirit may come to understanding;

and they that murmured may learn doctrine. Knowing all this, unfavourable appearances blunt not his zeal. Remembering that they who observe the wind will not sow, and that they who regard the clouds will not reap; in the morning he sows his seed, and in the evening he with-holds not his hand. He speaks the truth in love; not in a fierce, forbidding tone; not with an assuming magisterial air; not with unnecessary harshness; but with those indications of friendly affection, which bid fair to disarm prejudice, and to conquer the heart. If sometimes he reproves sharply, his severity is from mercy, not from cruelty, that they who are ready to perish may be pulled as brands from the burning.

Are the wicked his enemies wrongfully? Do those abuse and injure him, to whom, from the ties of blood or of gratitude, his interest should have been peculiarly dear? He recompenses not evil for evil. He wishes to serve; and when justice and prudence permit, he actually serves the men who hate him. He is not overcome of evil; but overcomes evil with good.

Do real Christians, through mistaken prejudice, esteem him their enemy, because he tells them the truth? Even this extinguishes not his affection. He pities and prays for them, and strives to promote their welfare, though the more he loves them, the less he is loved.

Are others in danger of being overwhelmed with sorrow, and do their souls refuse to be comforted? He makes allowance for this melancholy, wayward spirit. Looking up for a blessing to Him, who alone can make them to hear joy and gladness, and cause their bones which are broken to rejoice, he
points

points out to them in their distress, the consolations wherewith he himself hath been comforted by God.

He cannot relieve those, whose misfortunes are occasioned by the fraud or injustice of others, without procuring ill-will from men who have it much in their power to hurt him. He is sensible that the effects of their anger may prove formidable. Yet the dread of incurring it doth not deter him from heroically attempting to break the jaws of the wicked, and to pluck the spoil out of their teeth.

Are the distressed many, and the applications for relief frequent? When the necessities of others require, and his own circumstances and prior obligations permit, he giveth liberally and upbraideth not. He is rich in good works, willing to distribute, ready to communicate. His liberal soul deviseth liberal things. He openeth his hand wide to his poor brother, and, according to the means he possesses, lends or gives him what is sufficient for his need: knowing that he who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, that he who soweth plentifully shall reap also plentifully; and that God loveth a cheerful giver.

Is he solicited to less important services, and to kind offices of less extensive utility? Do these interfere with services, by which the highest interests of mankind might be better advanced; or to which his station, office, or talents, particularly call him? He prefers a greater good to a less; though this preference may expose him to inconvenience and reproach. He is aware that guilt may be contracted in the sight of God, by behaviour highly applauded and extolled by men. He remembers that even compassion, complaisance, gratitude, and other truly

amiable and endearing principles, are criminally gratified when they prevent men from the due improvement of any peculiar advantages, which Providence hath put in their hands, for averting extensive calamities, or for diffusing blessings to thousands. He respects the ties of blood, affinity, and friendship, and deeply feels his obligations to his benefactors. Yet worthy and able as they may otherwise be, he will not injure the public by recommending them, or those, in whose favour they solicit, to offices, the duties of which, they are not qualified usefully, or honourably to discharge.

To conclude this part of the subject, his goodness is not as the morning cloud and early dew that pass away ; but as the morning light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

I HAVE given you the character of the man faithful in goodness. Is it, my dear friends, your character? Goodness is a constant fruit of the Spirit; and if you have not the Spirit of Christ in you, you are none of his, and therefore are condemned already, and under the wrath and curse of God.—A negative goodness is not sufficient to justify your pretensions to the Christian character. Perhaps you are not chargeable with those acts of violence, which often flow from unbridled passion. You have not declared war, or commenced hostilities against your neighbour. You do not carry your resentment at him so far as to wish his utter destruction. But you are unaffected with his distresses. You take pleasure in putting a bad construction on his most innocent

innocent actions. You would rather accuse with rancour, and condemn with severity; than defend with good nature, and acquit with candour. You love not to be ridiculed: And yet company is agreeable to you, and conversation entertaining, where amiable characters are painted in the most ludicrous colours. Is this faithfulness in goodness? Is it loving your neighbour as yourself? Is it doing to others as you wish that others would do to you?

It is possible that some of you will plead, that you wish well to your neighbour, and do him good. It may be so; and yet you may not be faithful in goodness. Your kindness is limited by your conveniency and ease, which exclude the labours of love; by your covetousness, when without shrinking, you sacrifice the good of thousands to your low, mercenary, and interested schemes; by your pride, which cannot brook the thought of a superior; by your sensual pursuits, which the calamities of those around you cannot disturb or interrupt. You expect from others a warm, generous, active friendship. You give them only a cold and a fruitless esteem. Goodness, equity, justice, alike condemn your conduct and your motives.

You profess an universal benevolence. You call yourselves citizens of the world. Yet, because men are born in another country, or perhaps in a distant province of your own, you feel no joy in their prosperity; you are not grieved at their afflictions; and you can talk without concern of burning their cities, and slaying their young men with the sword. Or, because in your apprehension, another is a heretic or a schismatic, instigated by a blind religious zeal, you deny him that humanity, which the Jew of old
owed

owed to the Samaritan; and which the Christian still owes to the Infidel. When pious and benevolent plans are formed for lessening the misery, and encreasing the enjoyments of mankind, and for promoting the knowledge and practice of religion and virtue; you are among the first to be a supporter of them. But is it not that others may admire your public spirit, your liberality, or your zeal for God? Or is it not your grand motive or ambition to be the chief directors and managers of such designs? When disappointed in this, do you not become cold and indifferent, if not hostile to measures, which, as long as you flattered yourselves with the honour of conducting them, you was so forward to promote? How happy would the world become did all men possess the character which I have imperfectly delineated! One half of the distresses they suffer would be cured; and the other half abated. But the character, alas! is as rare as it is excellent.

II. I am now therefore to enquire what Solomon suggests to us, when he says, *A faithful man, who can find?*

1. He reminds us that this is a character not to be found among unconverted sinners. Men, whose goodness is not the fruit of the Spirit; men who have no goodness but their own; what they brought into the world with them, or acquired by improving their natural powers, will never be thus faithful and steady in goodness. God, who trieth the heart, and hath pleasure in uprightness, brings them into circumstances, which discover other and baser principles in them, to have been stronger than their boasted benevolence. Joab joined in Adonijah's rebellion,

bellion, though he opposed Absalom's. When men's compassion, generosity, and public spirit are not supported by religious motives, imaginary interest interfering with their goodness, one time or other will probably disclose the naughtiness of their hearts. Inferior principles may produce good conduct in particular instances; but a steady and uniform goodness, sacrificing to the sense of duty our strongest and most favourite inclinations, they cannot produce. When the Lord looketh down from heaven on the children of men, who have no higher principle than they derived from their earthly parents, there is none that habitually doth good, no not one^h. Their ruling passions, and their present interests limit all their goodness.

2. Faithfulness in goodness is uncommon. I say not that disinterested benevolence is a merely ideal character, which has no real existence, and that even the most generous actions take their rise from selfish, mercenary views. Surely a steady principle of genuine goodness hath not forsaken the earth, though it may often be necessary to search, in order to discover her dwelling place. The faithful in goodness are few compared with those who only assume the appearance of that amiable grace. Many are briars and thorns, plagues and curses to every society of which they are members. Some, with malignant joy, expose to contempt or detestation the most respectable characters; aggravate every blemish; detract from every beauty; charge with faults or follies never committed; insinuate to a neighbour's prejudice, what, bold in defamation as they are, they dare not assert, and praise, only that
their

^h Job xiv. 23.

their censures may be better credited, and may make deeper wounds. While some are so churlish and morose, such sons of Belial, that a man cannot speak to them ; there are others whose tongues are smoother than butter, when war is in their heart ; whose words are softer than oil, when within are drawn swords. Those who abuse not their talents to the hurt of mankind, often hide them in a napkin, seldom improve them for the benefit of others, and when they have opportunities and advantages for doing good, do it not. Some do good only to those who have done good to them ; or from whom they expect favours. Others confine their pity to men's outward distresses, and feel none for their perishing souls. Many put off God and man, with offices of kindness, which cost them nothing ; and when any thing considerable must be done or suffered for their neighbour, say, " This is a hard demand ; we cannot bear it." Imagine not, that in these respects, the former days were better than the present. Solomon's reign was a type of Christ's. Solomon's age was none of the worst. And if any prince could find out men faithful in goodness, one would think the wisest of princes would have found them out. Yet, from our text it appears his search for such men, was almost always unsuccessful. It may be hoped that modest worth was more frequent in some obscure villages of his kingdom, than in the capital, and at court. But eminent excellence, even in distant retired situations, would not have escaped his notice.

3. Fidelity in goodness in a strict sense and in full perfection, is not the character of the best saints on this side of the grave. There is none good, save

One.

One, that is God. No man on earth since the fatal apostacy has been uniformly faithful in goodness, excepting One, who was more than man. If any man offend not in that love to God, and to his neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law, the same is a perfect man. But we have not already attained to this ; neither are we already thus perfect. And he who saith, that he in no instance sinneth against the law of love, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Methinks I hear some enquiring, How may we attain the character which, you tell us, is as rare, as it is excellent? How can we become thoroughly good ; and more and more faithful in goodness?—The philosopher will reply : Harken to the instructions which I have learned from deep study of men and manners, and from long attention to the hindrances of goodness.—Bridle your hastiness to be angry. Subdue the pride and arrogance, by which cometh contention. Conquer the headstrong passions and appetites and the selfish interested spirit, so unfriendly to the feelings and operations of goodness. Break off unkind and offensive habits, lest, if longer persisted in, they become a second nature. Keep under, or bring into subjection, every imagination and desire, which hinders goodness from having its perfect work. Get rid of sloth and indolence, which, even “when to will is present,” prevent the good intended from being done. Cultivate a meek, a gentle, and a peaceable spirit. Learn more thoroughly than ye have yet learnt, that humility, lowliness of mind, and condescension, which delights in becoming all things to all men ; in stooping when necessary, to the meanest offices ; and in pleasing all men for their good to edification. Think in the

morning what opportunities of doing good are before you, and how you may improve them to the best advantage. Reflect, ere ye give sleep to your eyes, in what instances, through the past day, ye have fulfilled, or have violated the law of love.—Excellent precepts these! Directions truly necessary and important! If they were universally regarded and followed, men faithful in goodness would every where abound. The wisdom of Solomon recommends them. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” The authority of a greater than Solomon enjoins them. “Watch, that ye enter not into temptation.” They are taught not by philosophy only, but by inspiration. And he who contemns them, contemns not man, but God.—Yet, sublime as these precepts are, when considered as directions for becoming good, they are not sufficient. One thing they lack; and one difficulty they do not remove. How shall men be inclined, and enabled, notwithstanding inward corruptions, and the manifold temptations of life, habitually to relish, and to act under the influence of these precepts?—This important question philosophy does not resolve. He alone hath answered it, who was in the bosom of the Father. Much, I acknowledge, may be felt, resolved, and begun, from contemplating the loveliness of goodness, and the comforts and advantages which accompany and follow it, even in the present life. But from the depravity of the human heart, a steady and constant goodness is only acquired by faith in Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering a sacrifice of a sweet smelling

smelling savour. This is Paul's direction for walking in love ⁱ. If we attempt to build goodness on any other foundation than right conceptions of Christ's atonement, and a just or faithful reliance on it: when the winds and floods of violent inclination blow and beat upon this natural structure, it shall fall, and great shall be the fall thereof. It is not enough to believe that Jesus hath given us an example of generous and disinterested goodness; it is not enough to believe that he loved us as a friend, as a teacher, as a reformer of mankind; we must know and believe, and found our hopes for time and eternity on that highest instance of his love; his redeeming us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. Why else doth Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, recommend forgiveness, forbearance, love, unity, and even the affection of husbands to wives, from this manifestation of the love of Jesus? Why else does John enforce the duty of mutual love from this consideration, that we have known and believed the love of God towards us in sending his own Son to be the propitiation for our sins? Surely these inspired apostles taught us a motive to goodness more tender, more elevating, more effectual, than pretended reformers of Christianity teach, in their maimed and superficial creed, that Christ, from love to mankind, died merely as an example, or as a martyr for the truth. The faith which worketh by love, which produces a steady, diffusive, and uniform goodness, is such a persuasion that Jesus, by his obedience and sufferings, hath made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, as excites and en-

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courages

ⁱ Ephes. v. 2.

courages us to rely on his atonement and merits, for our access to God, and acceptance with him. Where there is no faith of our guilt and unworthiness, there will be no disposition “in honour to prefer one another,” and to bear with patience the contempt cast upon us, and the preference given to our competitors. He who believes not the kindness and condescension of God in the scheme of salvation through Christ, will seldom be kind and condescending, when his honour or his interest forbids him to be so. With difficulty will he forgive an inferior great and repeated provocations, who does not believe how much or how freely God hath forgiven himself. In ten thousand cases love will be coolly felt, and goodness feebly exercised, when the shield of faith quenches not the darts of inflamed and irregular desire. But true faith powerfully animates a good man to every inward sentiment, and to every outward expression of goodness. “Mean and vile as I am, he will say, the equal and fellow of the Almighty loved me, though an enemy and a rebel ; he paid my debt to Divine Justice, and submitted to be treated as a sinner, that I might be treated as a righteous person. And shall I hate those whom Jesus loved ? Shall I be hurtful or unprofitable to men for whom my Saviour laid down his life ? The bowels of Jesus were moved, and his compassions kindled by my wretchedness. And shall not I have mercy on my distressed brother, as he had mercy on me ? Jesus had infinite cause to hate and abhor me ; and yet he loved me even to the death. And shall I hate my brother, because I see something disagreeable in his temper, or in his conduct ? Shall I despise the man to whom Providence hath assigned an obscure and inferior

“ inferior rank in life ; when the Son of God, com-
“ pared with whose dignity my honours are debase-
“ ment, humbled himself, not only to look on my
“ low and wretched estate ; but to raise me by his
“ own abasement and sorrow, to honour and to joy ?
“ Me, the Redeemer loved, though my sentiments,
“ temper, and manners, were wholly opposite to
“ his, and though, in a thousand instances, I had
“ offended and injured him ? And shall I cease to
“ do good to others, whose opinions and inclina-
“ tions differ from mine, who have violated the du-
“ ties they owe me, or who have treated me with ne-
“ glect or harshness ? Shall I grudge in serving my
“ fellow-men, and my fellow-Christians, an incon-
“ siderable labour, or a trifling expence, when, for
“ my redemption, the Father spared not his own
“ Son, and the Son spared not his precious blood ?
“ Many waters could not quench the Redeemer’s
“ love to me. Many provocations shall not extin-
“ guish my love to those, whose nature he assumed,
“ and whose interests were dear in his sight. From
“ the life and death of Jesus let me learn how to ex-
“ press that love to mankind, which, from the love
“ of Jesus, was first kindled, and is still preserved
“ and cherished in my breast. He was meek and
“ lowly in heart. He went about doing good. He
“ relieved the distressed. He comforted the mour-
“ ner. He instructed the ignorant. He warned
“ and admonished those, who were out of the way.
“ When he was reviled, he reviled not again. For
“ men, who were repaying his former kindness with
“ base ingratitude, and barbarous cruelty, he pray-
“ ed, Father, forgive them, for they know not
“ what they do. Let the mind be in me which was,
“ and

“ and which so gloriously manifested itself in him !
“ Let me walk as he walked ! Thy death, O blessed
“ Son of God ! and Saviour of the world, not only
“ expiated my guilt and gave me the noblest pattern
“ of goodness ; but hath purchased the influences of
“ the Spirit to implant, to nourish, and to excite in
“ me that lovely grace ? Descend, O spirit of meek-
“ ness, forgiveness, goodness, and love ! Rest upon
“ me, and for ever abide with me. Henceforth may
“ I live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit ! Thus
“ may I prove a blessing to my family ; to my neigh-
“ bours ; to the sons and daughters of sorrow ; to
“ my country ; to the church of Christ ; to those
“ who know not ; to those who as yet despise my
“ Saviour ! Henceforth may I never decline any la-
“ bour of love, to which Providence calls me ! May
“ my services to mankind be numerous and exten-
“ sive as my opportunities of service ! And may
“ every day be distinguished by some act of good-
“ ness !—And when the shadows of darkness cover
“ me, let not their gloom be encreased by the bitter
“ consciousness that many days have been spent
“ without doing, or learning to do any thing
“ useful !”

I have still to consider—III. Solomon’s maxim,
That most men will proclaim, every man his own
goodness.—But I reserve this part of the subject for
another discourse on the same text.

SERMON VII.



ON THE OSTENTATION OF FALSE GOODNESS.



PROVERBS xx. 6.

MOST MEN WILL PROCLAIM, EVERY ONE HIS OWN GOODNESS ; BUT A FAITHFUL MAN, WHO CAN FIND ?

IN discoursing from this text, I have already endeavoured,

I. To explain what we ought to understand by goodness, and by a faithful man.—And

II. What Solomon suggests when he says, “ A faithful man who can find ? ”

I am now to consider,

III. Solomon’s maxim, That most men will proclaim every one his own goodness.

Solomon uses the expression, *most men* : for men truly good, conscious of the defects of their goodness, are not apt to think or to speak of themselves beyond what they ought to say : And those are bad men, wholly indifferent to the reputation of goodness or of any virtue, who declare their sin as Sodom,

dom, who glory in their shame, or who boast of crimes which they never committed; given up to a reprobate or undiscerning mind, they call evil good, and good evil. With them, malice is spirit, barbarous revenge is courage, cunning in deceiving and ruining others is wisdom, and a cool indifference, where they owe tender affection, is firmness of soul. They are ashamed of no vice or meanness; and yet through false maxims of honour, the least affront done to them, or the most trifling aspersion cast upon them, must be expiated by another's disgrace, or by another's blood.

More generally, however, men proclaim their own goodness; they disguise their true characters under a deceitful mask; and profess sentiments and affections, to which their hearts are utter strangers.

Full of their own importance, some are eager to acquaint others with their opinions, their actions, or their sufferings; are impatient, when they are diverted from this favourite topic; devise ten thousand expedients to force it on their companions; to the amusement perhaps of a stranger, disposed to laugh at, rather than to pity their folly; while their friends are wearied and tormented with the endless repetition of insipid trifles. Those insignificant details, though every sentence of them were believed, commonly fail to produce what the talker intends by them, or to convey any high idea of his character; and it does not seldom happen, that they produce the opposite effects.

While one aims at reputation, by telling what is of no consequence, another hunts for praise, by perpetually accusing and condemning himself, and bewailing his defects, his follies, or his sins.

But there are men who go to work more openly and directly, and to convince you of their worth,
tell

tell you what kind things on certain occasions they thought, said, or did; and what they would do if Providence should place them in more favourable circumstances. It was in this way that Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; for when any man came to king David for judgment, he thus accosted them: "Oh! that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause would come unto me and I would do him justice." Generosity, compassion, and in some countries, patriotism and public spirit, are qualities highly popular; and hence, many with a great deal of pride and ostentation profess them: and though they discover little of them in their conduct, they discourse of their amiableness, in a fluent and seemingly feeling strain. They delight to talk about goodness; for talking is easy and cheap: they hate to practise it; for practice, contrary to the ruling inclination of the mind, is severe and difficult. They tell you how deeply they are affected with their neighbour's misfortunes; and that his heart must be stone, who can view them unmoved; or decline to contribute to their relief. When you hear them speak, you would imagine that, if their power equalled their inclination, every injury would be repaired; that every grievance would be redressed; that every wound would be bound up; that every tear would be wiped away. But unfortunately, their benevolence is in their tongues, when little, or almost none of it is in their hearts, or in their hands. Their promises vanish into air. One year passeth away after another, and their pretended compassion brings forth no fruit. Under the garb of a courteous and affable behaviour, and of kind and generous

professions, they conceal, if not a cruel and envious, at the least a cold and unfeeling heart.

Others there are, who affect the character of catholic charity and moderation, as their distinguishing badge. And moderate perhaps they are, when the interests of mankind are injured, or when God is dishonoured. But an honest opposition to their dangerous errors, however candidly managed, they will not forgive. The most trivial offences against themselves or against the party they espouse, is barbarously resented by these men of charity.

You ask what reason can be given, why the words of men are so much at variance with their hearts and actions? Why are men the most conspicuous professors of goodness, who practise it the least? I reply: Notwithstanding the depravity of human nature, and the corruptions of the age in which we live, children are easily taught the beauty, the usefulness, and the necessity of an honest, humane, and charitable temper and conduct: and the traces left by such an education are a considerable barrier against the disorders which would otherwise, utterly overthrow the peace of society. Nay, men, not only from the instructions of their parents, but from the dictates of reason and conscience, in some measure, know that they ought to be good. Eminent generosity and beneficence engage almost universal approbation and homage. Depravity may hinder men from imitating; but the voice of nature constrains them to admire and esteem the conquerors of resentment, who repay injuries with kindness; the heroes, who sacrifice their lives in the cause of their country; the faithful friends, who dare to die, one for another; and the great and good, who value
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the distinctions of birth, and rank, and fortune, chiefly as advantages for the more diffusive exertions of compassion and kindness. We naturally despise or detest those whom pride, jealousy, or envy inflame with causeless hatred; who cruelly or implacably revenge slight, perhaps, even imaginary affronts; who delight in doing mischief, and distressing and tormenting those who are unfortunate, rather than guilty. The world, in general, retains too much common sense to be convinced by sceptical sophistry, that virtue and vice are indifferent, except in as far as they affect private pleasure or pain; and that beauty and strength are as really virtues as generosity or gratitude. The system, however ingeniously embellished and defended, that men are born with a dread of, and an antipathy to their kind, is too extravagant, and too palpably inconsistent with our feelings and experience, to gain many proselytes. No eloquence will persuade an ordinary understanding, that a bias to fly one from another, has united men together. We not only feel various wants, which only united efforts can supply, but we are conscious of an irresistible inclination for society. Treason against these laws of nature we may commit; but the treason is severely, sometimes instantaneously punished by the confusion and misery of the traitor. We respect the generous heart, the compassionate eye, the bountiful hand. Who would not wish to dwell in a world where every one rejoiced in the happiness of another, and no contention remained, but who should most abound in acts of disinterested benevolence? Passion may plead that happiness consists in gratifying every inclination and appetite, whatever our

neighbour may suffer by that gratification. But there is a light within, which depravity doth not altogether extinguish, through which those who are governed by covetousness, pride, sensuality, and revenge, appear mean and grovelling slaves; nay, monsters more fierce and destructive than the fiercest beasts of prey.

Hence, men find it indispensibly necessary to assume the appearance of genuine goodness, who yet possess it not. No society would bear an open profession, that one regarded only his own welfare, and would cheat, lie, or murder, without scruple, when his interest or his inclination prompted him. Those who are unconcerned whether their neighbour be happy or miserable, are not, however, unconcerned how they themselves are esteemed and treated by their neighbours; and are not willing to be accounted the narrow-hearted mercenary wretches, which in truth they are; or as such to be universally hated or despised. Tyrants and oppressors; those who make no conscience of acquiring a crown, or enlarging their territories by rebellion, usurpation, or unprovoked war; nay, the most infamous cheats and extortioners find pretexts for justifying their crimes, and appeal in words to that natural equity, which by their deeds they trample under foot. They who, without horror or remorse, view the dreadful calamities, in which they involve individuals, families, or whole nations, dare not proclaim that they are past feeling: and the language of justice and benevolence is prostituted to varnish over the most shocking cruelties. Did bad men honestly acknowledge that their conduct flowed from delight in mischief, or from the expectation of raising their own fortunes,

fortunes, by insidiously undermining the prosperity of others; the gibbet might be, dishonour certainly would be, the effect of their sincerity.

The danger, however, is for a season avoided, by a little decency and caution in committing crimes. Let men impose on others, and gain their confidence by pretending a warm attachment to them, or by promising the utmost real activity and diligence in their service. Let them, withal, chiefly attend to the acquisition of wealth or honour, and regard the good of others only to save appearances, and to prevent accusations and suspicions, which might obstruct the progress of their interested plans. Let them make a merit of actions, by which they have contributed to do good, though their highest end in them was to serve themselves. Many will applaud their goodness; and others too wise to be so easily duped, will want the advantage over them, which the low or execrable motives of their conduct, if unveiled, would have certainly given them. The notions of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, are so deeply engraven on the conscience, that to efface them entirely is no easy task. Kindness, compassion, and fidelity, are things which cannot be spoken against. The worst are often constrained to do homage to their beauty, usefulness, and necessity, even when they act in direct opposition to them. Nay, when the veil is so thin, that they are conscious it is seen through, a respect for decency prevents them from throwing it off entirely; and rather than that vice should be seen in her native deformity, disguises are studied and assumed, even when they are sensible that the penetrating observer perceives them to be disguises.

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What a testimony in favour of virtue is this even from her most deadly enemies ! How excellent that character, whose excellence even those of the most opposite spirit are forced to confess, and on occasions too, when such a confession reflects upon themselves the greatest dishonour !

There are some, however, who, in proclaiming their own goodness, must not be charged with such gross hypocrisy. They do not, by putting on artful appearances, deliberately deceive others ; but, unhappily, they are themselves deceived. They imagine that they are good, because they are guilty of no crying injustice, and because now and then they bestow some small insignificant alms on the necessitous ; though, perhaps, by their rigour in exacting debts, they risk the ruin of whole families. Nay, self-deceit sometimes varnishes over the most shocking barbarity with the fair colours of justice or of prudence. The peevish and passionate Jonah, who wished for the destruction of a city when there were more than an Hundred and Twenty Thousand infants, rather than that his honour, as a true prophet, should suffer by the preservation of the city ; probably would ascribe the emotions which agitated him, to a proper sense of his own dignity, as an ambassador from God, not to its true source, a proud and unfeeling heart. He whose heart is not affected with the distresses of others, and whose hands are seldom stretched out for their relief, ascribes to caution and frugality, what is indeed the offspring of selfishness and avarice. Causeless and immoderate anger is often indulged as a just indignation against follies and crimes, and revenge is vindicated as a necessary exertion of self-defence. Thus the bad flatter themselves

selves in their own eyes, until their iniquity be found to be hateful. Reason and conscience compel them to esteem the character of a man who is faithful in goodness; self-love renders them desirous to possess a character, so excellent and praise-worthy; and pride with wonderful dexterity, ascribes to goodness, sentiments, and actions, on which it had no influence; nay, it reconciles with it, what is certainly most opposite to it, an unfeeling, interested, and grovelling spirit. Many mistake for goodness, impressions of affection and sympathy, which almost, without reflection, arise when they see innocence injured, or virtue in distress. On hearing Nathan's excellent parable, the anger of David was kindled against the rich citizen, who had deprived his poor neighbour of a favourite ewe-lamb. The monarch's warm indignation at the crime of another, might lead him to think too highly of the strength of his own compassion and benevolence. And yet, at that time, he felt little remorse at his own more shocking cruelty, in contriving the death of the brave and loyal Uriah, that he might screen his own reputation from deserved reproach. Pity, which costs nothing; resentment at cruelty and injustice, in cases where no passion blinds the understanding, or perverts the judgment; and a reluctance to do that which is harsh and injurious, when notwithstanding, from mercenary motives, it is actually done; may prove that one has not entirely put off humanity. They cannot prove him to be possessed of a generous or steady benevolence. Tender emotions, and kind desires, intentions, and resolutions, are, on some striking incidents, almost unavoidable. But as this goodness is superficial, it generally proves short-lived
and

and inefficient. The object removed is forgotten; the emotion occasioned by it, ceases; and the heart becomes as cold and callous as ever. The sacrifice of ease, and pleasure, and profit, and honour, for promoting the best interests of our fellow-men, requires a strength of mind, which these animal impulses can never impart.

How different is it to judge according to the appearance, and to judge righteous judgment! Often are our sentiments of others ill-founded. A severe look; a distant, reserved, and forbidding air; rough and unpolished manners, occasioned by the defects of men's education, or by their line of life; instantaneously create a prejudice against persons whose hearts are, notwithstanding, benevolent and humane. Laudable zeal against vice, is often deemed a hatred of the vicious. On the other hand, a studied politeness, or artful complaisance; a flattering look, a smiling countenance, a mouth taught the language of that kindness, to which the heart is a stranger; usurp the honour to which they have no just claim. I do not speak of treacherous Joabs, who embrace, that the stabs which they meditate, may be given with more certainty, and may inflict a deeper wound. But I have here represented the opposite cases, in which we are betrayed by appearances into a rash judgment of the characters of others, often unjustly to their prejudice, and as frequently too much in their favour.

Let every one press after the fidelity in goodness, to which every false display of it is opposed. The great Lawgiver who alone hath power to save and to destroy, requires that we love our neighbour as ourselves. And shall passion or pride dispute a law,
which,

which, like Him who enacted it, is holy, and just, and good. There are some who are tempted to treat others harshly ; or to put off the wretched with cold professions of pity, when they deny them the needful relief ; or to prosecute injuries against themselves with unrelenting severity. Let such men remember that the cries of the necessitous and oppressed, ascend to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and that they shall have judgment without mercy, who have shewed no mercy. Thou art quick-sighted, may we say to a man of this character, in spying out the faults of another, or ingenious in exhibiting them in the blackest colours, or witty in turning them into ridicule. Consider who hath said, With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. God shall weigh demerit in an even balance ; and shall so unveil the disguised malignity, whatever its first aspect may have been, that it shall at last become the contempt and abhorrence of all flesh.

Perhaps, some one may be found to plead in his defence such language as this : What are other men to me, that I should love them ? Shall I love those, who have little or no excellence to deserve my love ? Nay, whose bad conduct, or whose injuries have justly incurred my displeasure ?—Shocking question in the mouth of a professed disciple of Jesus Christ ! He who made thee, made also thy distressed and offending brother, and one God formed you in the womb. You have all one origin. The same blood runs in your veins. Thou mayest indeed be endowed with talents, and distinguished by advantages above many others. But what hast thou that thou

hast not received? And if thou hast received more than thy neighbour, shouldst thou, on that account, undervalue, or hate him? If he has no worth to merit thy esteem or affection, neither hast thou any to merit that favour and friendship of God, without which, thou must be undone. If thy neighbour hath violated his duty to thee; if he hath attacked thy person, thy honour, or thy property; if he hath repaid thy favours with the basest ingratitude: still what are his offences against thee, compared with thy offences against the God who made thee, who preserves thee, and who hath ever dealt bountifully with thee. The earth, though full of such ungrateful rebels, is also full of the goodness of God; goodness displayed far beyond what we can ask or think. He renews his mercies every morning to those who are unworthy of the least of them. He gives them all things richly to enjoy; daily loads them with his benefits; spreads their tables; and maketh their cup to run over, that their abundance may supply the wants of others. With adorable patience and long-suffering, he causeth his sun to shine on the evil and on the good; and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. Yet turn away your eyes from wondering at this, to view a display of Divine goodness and compassion infinitely more amazing. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to suffer and die for our redemption. If God so loved us, ought not we also to love one another? Shall we decline acts of kindness to those, who, notwithstanding our prejudices against them, may be the beloved of the Father, and those whom Christ hath redeemed by his blood; destined

destined to become temples of the Holy Ghost on earth, and to dwell in heaven at last ?

We profess to serve the God of grace and truth, who will not accept a deceitful image of goodness. Our religion exhibits the purest truths, and the most astonishing graces and love. The Author of it went about doing good, and shed his precious blood, that he might bear witness to the truth, and that he might redeem even his murderers from endless destruction. And dare we call ourselves his disciples if we follow not his pattern ?

The heavenly bliss consists in contemplating truth, in tasting that the Lord is gracious, and in the exercise of love to God, to Christ, and to all the citizens of the New Jerusalem. Deceit, malice, or even cold indifference to our fellow-Christians, is a sorry preparation for these exalted joys. The goodness of God to us hath appeared, not in professions and promises only ; but in solid and substantial favours. Think on the chief mercy, the unspeakable gift of God. Contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be made rich. The loving-kindness of God hath not departed from you ; and, notwithstanding your provocations, he hath not turned away from you, from doing you good. And will you be false, lukewarm, and inconstant in your love to so gracious and faithful a God ; or averse to shew your sense of his undeserved kindness, by your benevolence to your fellow-Christians ? How much better suited would it be to your obligations, and to your conditions, that your lives should be full of goodness, testifying your warm gratitude to redeeming

love, and silencing the reproaches of the enemies of your faith. Cherish, I beseech you, the solemn impressions, which have been sometimes made upon you in the sanctuary, or in the closet, by the unparalleled labours and sufferings of the Son of God; and at least, let your future conduct be so amiable, and so useful, that all who see you may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus.

Are the bounties of heaven precious in your sight, and do ye feel your constant need of them? Know that with the merciful, God will shew himself merciful. Your faithfulness in goodness is imperfect; but God's faithfulness to his promises hath no defect. And what are his promises to men faithful in goodness. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: " the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. " The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, " and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou " wilt not deliver him into the power of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the " bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in " his sickness ^j." " And if thou draw out thy soul " to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then " shall thy light rise in obscurity; and thy darkness " be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide " thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, " and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be " like a watered garden, and like a spring of " waters, whose waters fail not ^k." " He which " soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and " he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also " bountifully ^l." " There is that scattereth, and yet " encreaseth; and there is that withholdeth more " than

^j Psal. xli. 1.—3.

^k Isa lviii. 10. 11.

^l 2 Cor. ix. 6.

“than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The
“liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that water-
“eth, shall be watered also himself^m.” Mercy shall
be granted to the good man, in the day when he
who stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, shall
cry also himself, and shall not be heard. Be not
therefore weary in well-doing; for in due season ye
shall reap, if ye faint not. And the harvest, what-
ever clouds and tempests may precede it, shall at last
be plentiful and glorious.

Let me conclude this discourse with one reflection.—How foolish are prejudices against vital piety, on account of the hypocrisy of some of those who have made a conspicuous profession of it. False pretensions to an excellent quality, strip not that quality of its intrinsic excellence. You have seen men falsely boast of their benevolence, charity, and public spirit; but will you therefore say, that there is no difference between these virtues, and a cruel, unfeeling, or interested temper? Some have deceived you by appearing good, when they were not so; but you do not thence infer, that none are truly good. You think not because one man has imposed upon you, that all men are impostors. The false appearances of intellectual or moral accomplishments are, you confess, no argument, that such accomplishments are of small value; or that there are no persons to whom they can be justly ascribed. Is it then a reason to call in question the excellence or the real existence of religion, that some individuals deceiving others, or being themselves deceived, assume the form, though strangers to the power of godliness? If the enemies of religion would talk consistently,

^m Prov. xi. 24, 25.

sistently, let them pronounce, not religion only, but integrity, compassion, benevolence, and gratitude, mere hypocritical pretensions to what has no real existence : and affirm that those men alone are honest, who proclaim, that they neither fear God nor regard man. But if, in the last case, common sense would instantly start back, and reject so absurd a conclusion, let not spite against piety, adopt, in the first case, the same frivolous and uncandid reasoning.

With these remarks I leave this subject to your serious and devout consideration: and earnestly pray, that whatsoever it hath suggested, which ought to be profitable for doctrine, or for reproof, or for instruction, may be accompanied by the blessing of God.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

ON THE WANT OF LOVE TO GOD.

JOHN v. 42.

BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YOU HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU.

THESE words afford a natural occasion to examine two opinions, opposite to one another, and both of them opposite to truth: the one, that the want of love to a Being, in whose character there is no blemish, and to whose kindness we are deeply indebted, is almost impossible; the other, that there is nothing blame-worthy, in not loving the Deity. The first opinion flows from too high an idea of the dignity of human nature; the second, from low and despicable conceptions of the character and of the goodness of God.

I. I am to shew, that it is not only possible to be destitute of love to God, but that this is a common character among men, who think most favourably of themselves.

And here let us attend to the natural evidences and expressions of love to created enjoyments, and of kind affections to our fellow-creatures.

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We are not apt to forget the man, to whom love is deeply rooted in our hearts. Our recollection of him is frequent and familiar, and is cherished with delight. If he undertakes to serve us, we yield entire credit to his promise; we joyfully venture every thing valuable in his hands; and we abhor every the least suspicion that he can abuse our confidence. When we see him affronted or injured, our indignation is roused: we instantly take part with him, and as far as it is possible are eager to procure him redress. Anxious to please him, that we may gratify his humour and inclination, we do not hesitate to cross our own. If we inwardly offend him, we regret it, and are forward to express our regret. We highly relish his company and conversation, and feel unhappy when we are deprived of them.

But, are there not many, who never thus manifested their love to God? Is there none, to whom Jeshurun's reproach, Deut. xxxii. 18. belongs: "Of the rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee." When vanity and trifles employ our cares, through the pride of our countenance we will not seek after God. God is not in all our thoughts. A maid forgets not her ornaments, nor a bride her attire. Yet the people who profess to love God forget him, times and ways without number; and few indeed can with truth appeal to him, "The desire of our soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name."—— Men imagine they possess an entire esteem and affection for God; and yet they call in question the sincerity and faithfulness both of his declarations and of his promises; they believe not the report of the Gospel and they deny him the credit and the trust, which

which they often implicitly give to things alike uncertain, unstable, and perishing.—Many are little concerned for God's honour and interest in the world. When his truths or his ways are evil spoken of, few can say to him with sincerity, "The reproaches " wherewith they have reproached thee, are fallen " upon me."—Men practise little, men forbear little, for the sake of pleasing God. Civility, though a principle much feebler than love, will effectually teach them to avoid every word or action, which can disoblige those with whom they associate; and in compliance with the inclinations of a stranger, they will readily relinquish or recede from their own. But, in the hour of temptation men do not hesitate to offend their Maker; and seldom argue as Joseph argued: "How shall I do this great wickedness, and " sin against God." And yet, "this is the love of " God," or this is the necessary evidence that we sincerely love him, "that we keep his commandments." —We are little affected with our rebellion against God; and seldom feel a suitable sorrow for our violations of his holy precepts.—Many care not to converse with God; and had rather be any where, than in his presence. They say to the Almighty, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. When they attend public worship, it is from respect to their friends, or to their neighbours, or to decency, or to character, not from love or respect to God. A God of spotless holiness and of inflexible justice, they would wish to be out of the universe; or, at the least, they would wish that his influence might not extend to them.

If you ask, Why is God so little loved? I reply: Human nature has degenerated; sense is exalted; the

intellectual powers are wofully depressed ; and what is invisible, though in itself superlatively excellent, has not force sufficient to fix our thoughts, or to engage our affections. Objects make an impression on us, as they appear to us, not as they are in themselves. Unconverted men have not those clear, or lively, or realizing apprehensions of invisible things, which, in whatsoever relates to God, must supply the place of sight. The loveliness, and the loving-kindness of God produce love, as often as any degree of their native glory is perceived. But men without the faith which is the evidence of things not seen, do not contemplate him who is invisible, and cannot discern his glory. Sense usurps the government of their minds, and they basely subject themselves to its dominion. Visible beauty charms and allures them, and visible danger alarms them, even without deliberation. The impressions which are made by these sensible objects are quick and sudden ; and, in many cases, they are both deep and lasting. But nothing reaches their hearts which does not glide into them through their external senses. What is not the object of sense, signifies nothing ; or makes but a faint impression ; or has little influence. That faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, springs from grace, not from nature. God must be unseen, and therefore, blinded and sensual men do not perceive him.

How low is man sunk in his apostacy ! how miserably fallen ! What defaces the beauty and symmetry of the body, or transforms its external figure into monstrous shapes, is justly dreaded. But, how then should that be abhorred, which deforms the soul of
man,

man, which divests the understanding of light, and the will and affections of rectitude? Sense takes to itself the business of the intellectual powers, and prescribes both what we shall esteem and regard, and what we shall slight or neglect. Man consents to her dictates, and implicitly follows them; meanly submitting to be guided or ruled by a principle which is common to him and the brute creation. Though formed originally after the image of God, and destined to serve and enjoy him, he degrades himself to lead the life of the beasts that perish. So diseased and disordered is his soul, that, because God is beyond the reach of his sight, he discerns not his excellency from his works or from his word, and is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his mind. No capacity or inclination remains for loving and enjoying the Fountain of blessedness. Such is the natural temper, the habitual course, and the wretched situation, not of one man, or of a few individuals, but of the whole human race in their unconverted state. The things which are seen, though a man can love them, are too empty and too vain to repay his affection, or to satisfy his desires. And even the infinite and all-sufficient God cannot make him happy, because he wants that love, without which God cannot be enjoyed. In the creature he cannot be happy, because the creature hath not happiness to bestow. And he cannot be happy in God, for toward God he hath lost all propensity, bent, or bias of mind. In this manner hath the apostacy of man not only deprived him of happiness, but formed him for the miseries of his fallen state.

Unconverted men often assume fair and courteous manners towards one another. Some broken and scattered fragments, some faint traces of nature's original laws remain impressed on their spirits. Those respecting their duties towards one another are more legible, are more immediately connected with the impressions of sense, and come more frequently in to their view, than those which relate to their duty to God. They more frequently reflect, that their neighbour ought not to be wronged, or to be disobliged, than that God should not be forgotten, or disobeyed. They cannot live alone; they are sensible of their mutual dependence; and even self-love instigates them to be social. When they receive a kindness from man, they know who has bestowed it, and that circumstance works upon their ingenuity or their gratitude. They must be sensible of the advantages which accompany the reputation of a benevolent temper, and of a generous action. They consider the inconveniences, to which an opposite character would expose them, and that even the meanest person, whom they affront or injure, may one time or other find an opportunity of repaying them seven-fold.

It is, I acknowledge, equally easy to be strict in the external forms of religion, to bow the knee to God, to sit before him as his people sit, and with the mouth to shew much love, or to assume the face and appearance of devotion. But all this bodily exercise may be, and often is, when men make no conscience of obeying the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
" with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy
" mind, and with all thy strength."

II. I now proceed to examine another opinion, equally dangerous; viz. That the want of love to God is not in itself blame-worthy; or is not blame-worthy in any high degree.

Here I observe,

1. That there are men who plead, that the senses, the natural inlets of human knowledge, are incapable of perceiving God; and that therefore God cannot justly condemn men, although they do not love or regard him.

To this plea I reply:

(1.) That it is only the apprehension of the mind, even with regard to sensible objects, which produces love or hatred. By various means an apprehension may be excited, that even objects, invisible to the bodily eye, are amiable or hateful. If nothing which strikes not the senses, can, or ought to touch the heart, then a danger which is discerned only by reason, is not to be feared or to be guarded against; no distant good is to be cared for; nothing is to be hated, and nothing to be admired, excepting that which we see with our bodily eyes. But is this indeed natural or true? No: we admire that which we know only by report. We dread a distant evil. We are offended or pleased, when things are told us, which we never saw. Nor is it otherwise with the affection of love. We are capable of loving; we, in fact, do love, and in some cases necessarily and unavoidably love objects which we do not see. Is it impossible to perceive the beauty and usefulness of science, of fortitude, of justice, of benevolence? Or, are these objects discerned by the external senses? Were you never informed of the excellencies and perfections of men, with whom you have never conversed, and never

never expect to converse? And was there no affectionate regard excited in your minds by the information you received concerning them? Think you, that the blind, because they see not their wives, their children, or their friends, are therefore incapable of loving them? And dost thou not love thy own soul, though thou canst not possibly see it? Whenever we are ascertained of the existence of objects, of their excellency, of our concern in them, or of our capacity to enjoy them, whether by our own senses, by credible testimony, or by the conclusions of reason, there is, in all cases, a sufficient foundation laid for esteem and love.

(2.) There are, in fact, sufficient means of convincing us that God ought to be loved.—The existence of God is demonstrable. If something now is, something must have always been. If there was a time, when nothing existed, nothing could ever have been: for, to suppose nothing to give existence to any thing, is to suppose activity before an agent or a source of activity existed, which is a contradiction. There must be some original being, who never began to be, and consequently, who exists necessarily, and of himself.—There are in the world, wisdom, and power, and justice, and goodness. These are not nothing. They could not come out of nothing. They must therefore belong to the original being, whom we denominate God.—The creatures we love may cease to exist, or may cease to be lovely. But God exists necessarily, possessed of every perfection, without any possible variableness or shadow of turning.—The excellence of God, and the evidence of that excellence is not diminished by his being invisible. Contemplate the human frame.

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That invisible principle, which thinks, reasons, loves, hates, chuses, resolves, is far more excellent than the body, by which man is allied to the brute creation. Still more excellent are the innumerable multitudes of angels; and the spirits of just men made perfect, who are not now, as when we conversed with them, retarded by the distresses and necessities of the body, in the pursuit of knowledge or of goodness. Even the visible glory, which we now see, is inconsiderable, when compared with that which we see not. Our little earth swarms with life. Other parts of God's vast and extended dominions, may be equally populous; and perhaps many of them replenished with creatures far more glorious than the inhabitants of the earth. Yet, the glory of the universe, and of all its inhabitants, is as the drop of the bucket, or as the small dust of the balance, when compared with his glory, who spake that universe into being, and who is himself infinitely full of life, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and of whatsoever is indeed perfection.—And now, is it unreasonable to love what is infinitely amiable? Is it impossible to be grateful to Him, to whom we are infinitely indebted; who formed us out of nothing, sustains us by his power, and is every moment doing us good? His glory is not the glory of a being, with whom we have nothing to do, and on whom we have no dependence. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. Without Him, we cannot think, or speak, or act. He imparts to us, and continues with us all our present comforts. And he is sovereign Lord of that unseen world, where, after a short time is passed, we must for ever dwell. Man is fallen from the integrity
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and happiness, for which he was first formed. His nature is become diseased and disordered ; his inclinations and affections, perverse and impure. Having incurred the displeasure of his Maker, he is exposed to just and severe vengeance. And yet He, against whom man had causelessly rebelled, proclaims himself to rebellious men, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Hear his gracious words to a people, who, by heinous and heaven-daring wickedness, had profaned his name ^a; “ Then, he said, will I sprinkle clean “ water upon you, and you shall be clean ; from all “ your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I “ cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you ; “ and a new spirit will I put within you. And I “ will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, “ and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will “ put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk “ in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments “ and do them ; and ye shall be my people, and I “ will be your God.”—With this God, though invisible, man may more intimately converse, than with any earthly friend. At all times, and in all places, he is equally accessible. He knows the inmost sentiments and affections, which the imperfection of speech incapacitates us from imparting to one another. He hears the secret sigh and groan. With him his people enjoy communion, when sitting in the house, when walking by the way, when lying down, and when rising up, as well as in the most solemn acts of worship. Now the glories of
God,

^a Ezek. xxxvi. 25.—28.

God, men's concern in him, and their capacity of enjoying him, are revealed outwardly in the sacred oracles, but inwardly and effectually by the Holy Spirit; and his influence, when implored through faith in the Redeemer, God will not withhold or deny.

(3.) Absurd and impious consequences would follow, from supposing, that men cannot love God, because he is invisible. If there could be no love to that which could not be seen by the bodily eye, the blessed God, who cannot be thus seen, would, by an eternal and unchangeable necessity, be excluded from the love of every other being; nay, even from the love of himself. The excellency of his nature, for that renders him invisible, would render him incapable of being loved. Or, if we suppose, that this impossibility results not from the nature of God, but from the original frame of the human soul; yet, even this supposition is reflected back upon God, as it represents him to have made a reasonable and intelligent creature, who is incapacitated, by a natural necessity, from loving the author of his being. It would also follow, that he who hath provided, for the lower orders of beings, enjoyments suited to their different natures, hath formed for misery the noblest creature on the earth. Man cannot be completely happy in any creature; and, by the opinion I am now considering, he cannot love God, and therefore cannot enjoy him. Doth not this exhibit man as composed of inconsistencies and contradictions? His nature as so constituted, as necessarily to impel him to love objects in proportion to their apprehended goodness and excellency: His understanding as capable of knowing God to be the best, the

highest, and most excellent good : And yet his love to God, the perfection of beauty, and the supreme good, as absolutely impossible.

(4.) Some have actually loved God, who never saw him with the bodily eye. Man was formed at first for the love of his Maker. In God was his highest complacency, and his chief delight. And what hath been certainly may be. Even since the apostacy of our first parents, many of those who dwelt in bodies of flesh, and depended on the impressions of their senses as much as we do, have yet, through grace, become sincere and fervent in the love of God ; and, for his sake, “ have not loved their lives “ to the death.” Though they saw him not, they every where saw those effects of his wisdom, goodness, and mercy, which powerfully induced them to prefer him, in their esteem and affection, to every thing besides. How have devout Christians, in all ages, loved and adored the Father of our Lord Jesus, who so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, to restore to us his lost image and forfeited favour, by obeying the law perfectly, and by suffering the penalty due to our disobedience. Nay, under a darker dispensation, how pure and refined, how ardent and sublime were the devotions of some faithful men ? With what divine extacy did Moses contemplate the marvellous and merciful dispensations of Providence, in behalf of Abraham’s race ; “ Who is like to thee, O Lord, among the “ the gods ? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ? ” To what height was Deborah’s love raised by Israel’s deliverance from Jabin ; when, not content with her own gratitude and praise, or with the invitations
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she addressed to others to join in these delightful exercises, in lofty strains of piety and of benevolence, she poured out blessings upon all the lovers of God: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun, when he goeth forth in his might." What warm expressions of love, what exalted strains of praise and adoration every where abound in David's psalms. When he beheld the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, which he had ordained, from a view of their beauty and glory, transported with high and venerable sentiments of their most glorious Author, he sings; "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" With what rapture does he celebrate the wonders of redemption and grace, and exult in the blessings which he derived from them. Consult when you retire from this place. Psal. xviii. 1.; xxvii. 4.; xlii. 1. 2.; lxxiv. 1.; lxxiii. 25.; civ. 31.—35.; cxi.; cxlii.; cxxxviii.; cxlv. Surely the breathings of Divine love, which these texts express, if they had not been found in writings, which men think it convenient to acknowledge to be inspired, would, in other circumstances, have been pronounced to be the language of deluded enthusiasm. If, in former times, good men manifested a becoming warmth of devotion, why should that which resembles them in our days be traduced as fanatical? Is God less lovely, than under the old dispensation? Or hath he done less for Christians than for Jews? Or is the blessed Spirit, who sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of men, now "straitened" in communicating the influence for which we pray the Father?

On this head, I now observe,

2. That there are men who admit it to be possible, that those who see not God may love him; but they argue, that such love is unsuitable to the natural and common inclinations of mankind, and therefore cannot be fitly enjoined as a duty. “The dependence which men have upon their bodily organs, they will say, infers a disinclination to the love of things, which come not within the cognizance of their senses. If they would look into their hearts, they would find them, in fact, not to be inclined to the love of God: And wise lawgivers study to suit their laws to the tempers of their subjects; and justly deem it improper and impolitical to enact statutes, which are directly contrary to the prevailing bias of a people. Can we then suppose that the wise Ruler of the universe obliges man to a perpetual war with himself; to run counter to his most natural inclinations; and to abandon what he sees to be beautiful, or feels to be delightful, in order to place his affections on an invisible being, of whom his ideas are faint, shadowy, and obscure? Is not God’s being unseen, if not an entire excuse for the want of love to him, at least a considerable alleviation of our deficiency in that respect?”

And here I readily acknowledge, that human rulers, in enacting laws, about matters indifferent or of small consequence, ought to regard the inclinations of those whom they govern. To impose on subjects without necessity, that which is in itself disagreeable or harsh, is both unjust and cruel; and may often provoke dangerous tumults or seditions. At the same time, in matters absolutely necessary
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for securing the honour of the prince, and the happiness of the subject, the gentlest and most equitable government is often constrained, for these important purposes, to oppose both the inclinations and the humours of the people, which they would otherwise have gladly gratified. Though the government of God is in no hazard from the fiercest attempts of rebellion, yet all the laws of God are holy, just, and good, and wisely adapted to the natural powers of those on whom they are obligatory. The law of loving God with all the heart was made for man, when he was no way disinclined to that love. Man has violated a law perfectly reasonable in itself, and completely adapted to his original powers and faculties. But ought it, on that account, to be repealed or annulled? If it ought, laws are good for nothing, because any one, by transgressing them, can cancel their obligation. No duty is neglected, and no sin is committed, without something radically defective or blame-worthy in the inclination of him who is guilty of the neglect, or of the sin. But doth evil inclination diminish, or not rather aggravate a crime? Nay, is it not propensity and inclination, which constitute an action criminal? Actions, however hurtful, yet if unintended, are regarded as innocent. But the intention of what is wrong is never thus considered. Is the drunkard or debauchee excusable, because a headstrong appetite, strengthened by long habits of indulgence, stimulated them to their peculiar vices? If you think so, do you also think, that thieves, and robbers, and murderers, should be permitted, with impunity, to do all imaginable mischief to you and to your families, when they have a disposition so to do? Vicious inclinations

tions or antipathies are in no instance sustained as an apology for criminals. And are they not criminals, who want a disposition so highly reasonable as the love of God? Can there be a worse propensity in a creature, than disaffection to the great original of its being? God endowed man with an understanding which could know, and with a heart which could love him. It is a sordid depression, and a perverse abuse of these noble faculties, to withhold them from their best and highest exertions. Love, prostituted to vain and loathsome idols, is profaned and dishonoured; and is then only sanctified and ennobled, when it is fixed upon God. Mean and abject are they, who seek happiness, where the brutes can seek it, though allowed to aspire after a union with the God of glory, and a participation of his fulness. It is meet that He, who planted love in our breasts, should eat the fruits of it. To prefer to him any creature, is to alienate from him the spirit which he made, and which he claims as his own; since creation, if any thing, must constitute property. Not to love God, is not to love happiness; for with love to God, both our present and our future happiness are inseparably and necessarily connected. See Rom. viii. 28. and 1 Cor. ii. 9. Nay, it is a merciless attempt to rend our souls from their supreme good, and to abandon them to misery. Recovery to the sick; food to the hungry; rest to the weary; are no burden. And shall it be to us a grievous yoke to chuse God, and to solace ourselves in him as our portion and our happiness? The law of love is a law, teaching man to be happy, by exulting in the rich fulness of the Divine goodness. While sensible objects court their affections, and
flatter

flatter their hopes, it is possible that men may not feel their present need of God. But, when the fleshly tabernacles, in which they now dwell, are dissolved; when the world is destroyed, and their souls are bereaved of every created enjoyment, they must be indeed wretched, who, not loving God, cannot be happy in him. The want of love to God renders man incapable of doing God any chearful or acceptable service: for he is glorified only by a voluntary devotion, which, without loving him, it is impossible to render him. Outward exercises of worship, or external acts of obedience, when they do not flow from this source, are no more the same thing, which the law enjoins, than the carcase of a man is the man. Kind affections and benevolent conduct to men, when they are not animated by love, are no better than friendly intercourse among rebels, who have joined in a conspiracy against their lawful Lord.—The exercise of other graces, and the performance of other duties may be prevented by particular places, times, and circumstances. But in every time, place, and outward circumstance, to a soul rightly tempered, the love of God is possible, nay, it is easy and pleasant.—The obligation of this duty is no matter of doubtful disputation. No reason can be assigned for enmity, disaffection, or even indifference, to the Perfection of beauty, the Parent of our beings, and the Fountain of our mercies. We cannot excuse our want of love to him, unless we either plead, that we are destitute of a sound understanding and a feeling heart; or, that God is not, or hath not manifested himself to be, worthy of our love. Can there be blasphemy more monstrous or horrible, than to deny, that there is in God every thing

thing excellent and amiable; or to maintain that the human race is little indebted to his goodness? Strange it is indeed, that so little remorse is felt for this shocking impiety. Is it not practical atheism? Is it not to deny in the heart the perfections of God, when we cherish no emotions which correspond to these perfections?

Though these things are so, multitudes, instead of loving God, are full of enmity against him. Though many express little tenderness to the interest of their neighbours; yet never were laws enacted in favour of murder, perjury, or rapine; or against justice, compassion, gratitude, fidelity, and the other social virtues. Against piety the edge of penal statutes hath been frequently turned; and those, who manifested love to the God who made them, and to the Saviour who redeemed them, have, on that account, been often persecuted to the death. Yet, from wretched miscreants, who hate and affront, or who forget and despise God, the riches of his sparing mercy, and liberal bounty, are not withdrawn. No shadow of excuse can be offered for their horrid wickedness; and no punishment can be conceived more than adequate to such aggravated guilt. And yet, to such offenders, God waiteth to be gracious.

I observe also,

3. That of so little account is the love of God with many, though to implant it in the hearts of men was one leading end of the great redemption, that all the zealous or fervent expressions of it are censured, as hypocritical; or despised, as enthusiastic; or, at best, are ascribed, by the malignity of the world, to such mechanical causes, as the free circulation of the blood, or the brisk agitation of the animal spirits.

No

No evidence can be given, that those who profess religion, and at the same time maintain a sober, virtuous, and exemplary deportment, are hypocrites. To bring, therefore, such a charge against them is highly unreasonable. Charity and candour, unless constrained by evidence, take not up a bad report of another; and entertain not harsh sentiments of his springs of action. To search and judge the heart is to usurp the prerogative of God. It is a task, with which we have no business; and which we are utterly unqualified to manage. Such censurers should seriously consider what that is, with which they presume to find fault. Is love to God, or at least a warm and vehement love, in their eyes criminal? Would they expunge, from the sacred oracles, the first and great commandment of loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? Do they honestly think, that any are in danger of loving God too much? "No," they will reply, "we blame not the fervour of men's devout affections; but we blame the appearance, or the profession of such fervour." Yet they find no fault with the sun for shining, and cast no reproach on professions of attachments to persons of worthy characters, or on the disposition to glory in their friendship. They think not the worse of Fulke Greville for causing to be engraven on his tomb, this short inscription, "Fulke Greville, servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to king James, and friend to Sir Philip Sydney." And yet a bad name is fixed on men, who disguise not their love to God, and the value which they set, above every thing else, on an interest in his favour. David avowed his warm and lively devout affections, in the strongest lan-

guage, in the most public manner, and with the utmost solemnity ; and was willing that his regard to God should be known throughout all ages. And shall those, who humbly copy after him, in this noble elevation of spirit, meanly conceal the same emotions, as if they were indeed shameful or unreasonable?—The truth is ; the charge of hypocrisy brought against those who love God is itself hypocritical. All who profess any religion, must profess love to God ; because, without such love, there is no religion. Now, those who censure the fervent expressions of love to God, are well pleased with men, who, though they profess religion, seem to be anxious to proclaim by their practice, that their profession is a mere pretence or mockery ; and are only angry when love to God appears to be sincere. It is therefore sincerity, not hypocrisy ; genuine love to God, not the mere pretence of it, which vexes and disquiets them. They cannot endure to think, and yet they cannot avoid suspecting, that a neighbour feels the devout affections which they want ; and, therefore, envy and malignity prompt them to traduce the excellent ones of the earth. To censure them directly for the love of God would not be born : and, therefore, they bring against them the more plausible charge of falsely pretending to the love which they do not feel.

The charge of enthusiasm is often equally ill-founded. Those who indulge a luxuriant fancy, from ideas of God and divine things, which neither reason nor scripture will warrant ; and, by these, are raised to rapturous, extatic emotions ; we readily acknowledge, entertain themselves with mere shadows ; and first form, and then worship, an idol.

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Nevertheless, the mere fervency of love to God will not prove it to be enthusiastic; for, the justest apprehensions of God lay a foundation for the strongest and most vehement love. Indeed, the love of the most devout and fervent Christians falls infinitely short of the superlative excellence of the Deity. Exercises and expressions of love to God, may be sober and rational, though much more vehement than is usual. What intense affection breathes forth in these expressions of David, “I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for thy commandments °.” “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, O God ♀.” Good men have sometimes gloried in the expressions of fervour, which by the worldly or the lukewarm were regarded as madness. David, when he was censured for dancing before the ark, says, “I will play before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus ¶.” Paul thought not himself disparaged, when he was represented by the judaizing teachers as a wild fanatic; and he judged it to be a sufficient apology for being, what they termed, *beside himself*, that the cause in which this character was ascribed to him was the cause of Christ: “Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us †.”

It is not denied, that the right temper of the bodily humours, and the brisk motion of the blood and animal spirits, may contribute to the greater intense-ness of devout affections, and to the exercise of them with more sensible vigour. Yet it doth not follow,

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° Psal cxix. 131.

♀ Psal. xlii. 1.

¶ 2 Sam. vi. 22.

† 2 Cor. v. 13. 14.

that such affections and their exercise have nothing in them spiritual and divine. Love to God, and love to the creatures, are seated in the same faculties of the soul. It is therefore absurd to require, that they should be exerted by different corporeal organs. God hath not given us one tongue to speak of divine things, and another to talk of worldly matters; one set of hands to manage our common business, and another to lift up to God in prayer; one set of eyes to read the Bible, and another to read a newspaper. Besides, it ought to be observed; that warm devotion appears in men of the most different tempers and constitutions; and that even when the heart and flesh faint and fail, and the bodily strength is nearly exhausted, the love of God has been often perceived to have been then as fervent and vigorous as ever.

Let us now attend to the practical improvement of this subject.

If the love of God is of so much importance in true religion, it highly concerns us, strictly to enquire, if we are indeed possessed of this divine principle. There are many ignorant and careless souls, who, at random, and without having considered the subject, conclude that they love God, although they never felt any genuine emotion of devout affection. In other cases, it is deemed rash to fancy that things exist, of whose existence there is no evidence or appearance: yet, from a fond, extravagant partiality to themselves with regard to the love of God, men pass a judgment in their own favour, which no impartial judge could possibly pronounce. They flatter themselves that they love God, because the want of love to God appears to them to involve a
character

character inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. Conscience, in some instances, perceives what is reasonable and fit, and thence they conclude that their temper corresponds to their convictions; though their experience may often shew them, that the judgment may be satisfied of the merit of another, to whom the heart, notwithstanding, bears a settled aversion. Love is so powerful a principle, and has such a command of the thoughts, of the desires, and of the actions of those whom it animates, that it is impossible that it should ever be seated in the heart, when its active influence is neither perceived nor felt.

There is, however, an opposite mistake, against which men of tender consciences need to be cautioned. Not feeling those warm and passionate affections towards God, which they often feel towards other objects, they sometimes conclude themselves to be destitute of the grace of love. But the actual exercise of that grace may be interrupted, and yet a habitual bias to it may remain. Nay, it may be exercised, when there is no impression made on the animal spirits; otherwise, souls separated from the body would be incapable of loving God. Its exercise may even be as really discerned, as passions are which affect the body. For there is nothing we are more capable of noticing or reflecting upon, than our thoughts, desires, choice, or resolutions. It is true, while the soul dwells in the body, her affections most commonly discover themselves by their influence on it; and holy affections sometimes make deep impressions on the animal spirits. If, therefore, while we are passionately affected towards created enjoyments, we are insensible of any such emotions towards God
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and invisible things, there may be some reason to suspect the want of love to God; or, at least, the weakness of that principle. But if we are equally without the experience of passionate emotions towards other objects, there is no ground for such a suspicion. Men's natural tempers are different. The state of some minds is naturally cool and dispassionate; and is seldom or almost never agitated. Others are sensibly and passionately impressed by whatever they love or hate. Now devout and truly religious affections, in different men, are in a great measure regulated by their different tempers; as water assumes the form of the vessel into which it is poured. Besides, what is sudden and extraordinary, occasions more sensible effects or expressions of passion, than what is more common and familiar, though our affection, in the latter case, may be often stronger. A transport of affection is often produced by an unexpected visit from an old friend, which we do not feel from our daily conversation with our dearest relatives, in whose happiness, and in whose society we are, notwithstanding, much more deeply concerned. It is possible, in like manner, that some who walk most steadily with God, have not so much experience of passionate emotions in the love of God, as others have, to whom the view of God's glory, or the enjoyment of devout intercourse with him is much more rare or unusual. And it is certain, that no degree of passionate impressions can furnish as decisive evidence of love to God, as we receive from the life which is governed by a steady regard to his honour and authority, and by an habitual endeavour to guard against every thing which would offend, displease, or dishonour him. This our Lord himself hath

hath explicitly taught us. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” And again; “If any man love me, he will keep my sayings^s.”

If the love of God is thus necessary and important, let us diligently cultivate this divine principle. Alas! without love to God, life is a dream, religion is an empty shadow, external acts of worship are dull, pitiful, unmeaning ceremonies; and whatever fond hopes men may entertain of happiness, estranged as they are from the supreme and only satisfying good, misery must infallibly be their portion. With what horror will the apprehension strike a sinner in his dying hour, of being speedily dragged before the tribunal of that God, whom he never loved, and to whom he was truly and habitually all his days a stranger. But on the other hand how easy and comfortable is the death-bed of a christian, who knows, that death shall convey him to his best friend; and not to a stranger or to an enemy; that he shall only change his place, not his employment or his society; and shall better know and love, and more fully enjoy that blessed Being, whom, even on earth, though amidst much imperfection, he knew, and loved, and enjoyed, above all other beings.

In order to attain the love of God, or to preserve this grace in lively exercise, let me exhort you to supply your inability to see God, by the faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. Endeavour to fix on your minds strong and lively apprehensions of God’s necessary existence, and of his supreme excellence; for they who come to God by desire, or who rest in him with delight, must believe that he
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is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him; a rewarder of them, by being himself “their exceeding great reward,” communicating to them, from his own fulness, the best and the supreme good.—Often converse with invisible objects by means of serious and attentive meditation. Minds chiefly busied about enjoyments common to man with the brute creation, are incapable of loving, or of enjoying the glorious God. The intellectual eye, if it is shut, or if it is turned another way, cannot perceive uncreated beauty, or kindle the love of it within the heart.—Firmly believe, and diligently study the Gospel, as the brightest manifestation of God’s excellence and of his love. Because no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him. He came down from heaven to acquaint the world, what God is; by his doctrine, by his life, and by his death. God, who hath his creatures entirely under his power, could not possibly intend to deceive them, by representing himself differently from what he really is. The veneration of deluded heathens for the image, pretended to have come down from Jupiter, shall, in the day of judgment, rise up against, and condemn nominal Christians, who so little respect that lively representation which God hath given of himself, in his blessed word, for drawing men to communion with himself. How shameful is it, that the attractive discourses recorded in the Gospel so seldom engage our solemn or attentive meditation! What is most affecting in its nature or tendency, even though it is known and believed, yet, if it is not seriously or sufficiently considered, will fail both to affect and to influence us. Would you emu-
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late the warm devotion of a David? Like David, think on God in your beds: meditate on him in the night watches: entertain no apprehensions of him, contrary to what is revealed in the sacred oracles. Harsh or gloomy thoughts of God stifle every delightful and ingenuous affection. If Satan or melancholy should suggest, that God is irreconcilable; listen rather to the Divine testimony, that whosoever cometh to Christ, he will in no wise cast out. An entire faith and confidence in that testimony melts the heart into gratitude and love.—God offers himself to thee, to be thy God and portion. Make him really thine, by an entire and chearful acceptance of the offer. Relation, interest, and property, mightily command affection. How then must love to God glow within their hearts, who can, upon good grounds, glory in him, as their father, as their husband, as their friend! What an edge must it give to devotion, to be able thus to triumph; “God, even our God, will bless us. This God is “our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide, “even unto death.”—Maintain a realizing sense that God is every where present, and continually doing thee good. Let every creature, every place, every providence, awaken or strengthen this recollection. Observe, with corresponding acts of admiration, gratitude, and praise, every display of God’s glory, every footstep of his power and wisdom, every expression of his goodness. Few are so churlish or so morose, as to feel no kindness for those, with whom they frequently converse. Habitual intercourse with God, and the daily contemplation of his glory, sweetly captivate the heart, and render the exercises of love

both natural and familiar—Withdraw your hearts more from created enjoyments. “Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. We cannot serve two masters,” so opposite as God and the world: “If we love the one, we shall despise the other.” Conscious, how easily sensible objects attract us, and how insensibly they gain an immoderate influence over us, keep the heart with all diligence; and attend to the very first risings of desire.—Above all, earnestly plead, that the Spirit, whose fruit is love, may effectually circumcise thee to love God, with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. As easily may the unconverted sinner create an universe, as kindle in his own breast this sacred flame. He needs another and a better spirit than his own, even the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, to cure his enmity and disaffection to his Maker. That understanding, by which God is known in his true glory and in his matchless love, and that power by which the stupid carnal heart is raised above the sphere of sense, and knit in love to Him who is the perfection of beauty, are things given and received, and are given only by the Son of God. Man hath them not of himself. Even where the love of God is implanted, fresh supplies of the spirit of Christ must enable the believer to keep himself in the love of God, and to oppose, with success, the dictates of imperious sense, which would confine his regards to things visible. How inestimably precious the Mediator, who hath not only reconciled God to man, by expiating the guilt of man’s disaffection and enmity; but who re-

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conciles man to God, by correcting and effectually subduing the evil principles of the human heart!
“ We have known and believed the love which
“ God hath to us. God *in Christ* is love *indeed*; and
“ he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and
“ God in him.”

SERMON IX.

ON THE UNPRINCIPLED CONTEMPT OF RELIGION.

PSALM x. 13.

WHEREFORE DO THE WICKED CONTEMN GOD?

IF we consider who God is, we must be struck with astonishment—that any who have the least spark of reason, can be weak and wicked enough to condemn him. Two things generally preserve from contempt among men, even when separated, as they often are: conspicuous excellence and perfection; and eminence of rank and station, especially when attended with extensive authority and power. When these in any degree meet together in one man, that man is almost universally esteemed. And yet “the wicked condemn God,” who, on both these accounts, is infinitely worthy of honour.

They condemn a God, unspeakably glorious and great. From him as the source, all created excellence and perfection flow. And, therefore, our esteem and reverence of him should be kindled by every object we behold, which is either beautiful or venerable. Compared with Himself, all created beings, and all their goodness and splendour are as
nothing

nothing and vanity. Spots of imperfection are to be found in the brightest creatures. "He putteth
"no trust in his saints, the heavens are not clean in
"his sight, and he chargeth his angels with folly." But in his perfection there is no defect, or mixture, or alloy. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. The excellencies of the highest orders of creatures, great as they are in themselves, are as a drop to this infinite ocean of perfection; as the glimmering light of a candle to the sun shining in his meridian splendour. So impossible is it for creatures to equal the perfections of God. They cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection. The glory of his nature is
"high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than
"hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof
"is longer than the earth, and broader than the
"sea."

And He who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see, is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and worthy of the highest honour and reverence. None else can possibly possess the vast and immense dominion which belongs to him. The heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. Is there any number of his armies? And upon whom doth not his light arise? None else possesseth such supreme power, and absolute authority. All his subjects were created, and are sustained by him; and they all contribute willingly, or unwillingly, to promote his glory, the great end for which he gave them existence. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work. Surely, even the wrath, the folly, and the wickedness of his most rebellious subjects,
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shall be over-ruled to praise him, and the remainder thereof he will restrain. Nebuchadnezzar built a magnificent palace for the glory of his majesty. But how poor and pitiful a work was this, compared with the creation of the glorious fabric of the heavens, and of the earth! What works are like His, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. All the vast variety of beings wherewith the world is stored, was called from nothing by his Almighty word: And all things depend upon him as much as the image in the glass depends upon the presence of the face which produces it. If he withdraw his face, his sustaining power and influence, his creatures return back to their primitive nothing; their excellencies vanish, and their operations cease. He maintains and spreads a table for all; and as all things flow from him, so all things tend to him, as the rivers which flow from the sea return to it again. All bow and do homage to him. Every creature, which is in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Some, allured by his grace, with cheerfulness admire and adore. Others, constrained by the greatness of his power, reluctantly submit. Thus glorious is he in respect of state and dominion; and his dominion is an everlasting dominion; and his kingdom from generation to generation.

And are any weak and wicked enough to condemn this God? Yes, my brethren, too many are

so. The truth of this heavy charge will sufficiently appear from their conduct and temper towards God. Men give him the body without the soul, as if he did not deserve both, and would be satisfied with that which is of least value. They draw nigh to him with the mouth; they honour him with their lips; but their heart is far from him. The throne of the heart is filled with empty vanities; and the worst and lowest room in the soul is thought sufficient for the Lord of glory. Few delight in cultivating and cherishing high and venerable thoughts of Him, whose greatness is infinite. The covetous man exalts his gold, the ambitious his honour, the voluptuous his sensual gratifications above God; or rather, they make these their gods, and fall down and worship them. Nothing is so mean which a carnal heart will not idolize, and advance above the Highest: not indeed by outward adoration; but, by what is of far greater worth, by inward regard and affection. The thoughts dwell oftener, and with greater pleasure, on other objects than on God. The current of them runs in another channel, than the contemplation of his glory. The creatures have the first or the chief influence. Men do more for them, than for the Creator. To part with worldly enjoyment overwhelms them with bitterness and grief. They refuse to be comforted. But they say not, where is God my Maker. If they have the world, they inquire not where he is, and care not how much they sin against him.—And, as the love of God dwelleth not in them; so there is no fear of God before their eyes. Without dread, they make a sport of sin; drink in iniquity as the ox drinketh in water; wantonly provoke the Almighty; and, by deliberate

deliberate acts of rebellion, rush upon his spear, and upon the thick bosses of his buckler. If they can be screened from public justice, and concealed from the eye of man, they are regardless of God's notice, and fearless of his vengeance. They can eat, and drink, and sleep, and be merry, though living in the habitual and presumptuous practice of crimes, against which, the supreme Law-giver hath denounced tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish. They flatter themselves that God will not requite their guilt, and that the words of their teachers shall become as wind. They act, as if they had made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, that no destroying scourge should come nigh unto them: Nay they act, as if He, who cannot lie, were deceitful in his threatenings; as if Justice, for their sakes, would prove partial; or, as if Omnipotence could, by them, be resisted and overcome: and as in their hearts they despise God, so out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. That awful name, which angels adore, and at which devils tremble, is tossed about by worms of the earth, with such lightness and vanity, as if the greatest of all beings were the meanest and most despicable; or as if the honour of speech consisted in dishonouring him who bestowed it. A weak mortal will not endure to have his name slighted or abused; and yet imagines that the King of kings will not observe it, when men's words are stout against him, and when his enemies, with a hardened and unprincipled profanity, take his name in vain.

Nearly allied to this, are the conduct and temper which men discover with respect to things relating to God. His *ordinances*, though they serve as a glass

to represent his goodness or his glory, or as the channels which convey the influences of his grace, are a weariness or a burden to them. They are soon fatigued or exhausted by them. They think that there is no great advantage to be derived from them, and that as far as they are personally concerned, they can do as well without them. They pay more respect to the words and messages, I say not of a prince, but of a fellow-subject, no way their superior, than to the message of the Sovereign of the universe. The great things of his law, and the yet greater things of his Gospel, are treated by them as strange or uninteresting things. If fashion conducts them to the places of worship, they attend them without any suitable solemnity or earnestness. They sit before God, as his people do ; but their hearts go out after their covetousness. As if the external forms of duty were all in all, they have no solicitude with regard to the frame of mind with which they perform their religious service ; or with regard to the effects which they do or do not experience. Saints, though God's chief favourites on earth, his treasure, his jewels, yea, dear to him as the apple of the eye, are accounted by them " as the filth of the earth, and " the offscouring of all things." The more of God's image any man seems to possess, and the more tender and conscientious his behaviour is, they just so much the less esteem him. What disgraceful names do they invent for those who are considered as religious men ? What calumnies do they raise against them ! How watchful do they become for their halting ! How glad of their fall ! How ready " to take " up an ill report " to their prejudice ! How cruel and merciless in exulting over their weaknesses ;

and in tearing to pieces their characters, for things, which, if they had been done by others, they would have pronounced to be innocent, if they did not affirm them to be praise-worthy. They think it a good ground of dislike, or a sufficient reason to view every thing in its worst aspect, that the godly do not run to the same excess of riot which they indulge, and that their ways are guided by another rule. Hence he that departeth from evil, makes himself a prey, and becomes a sign and a wonder in Israel; the scoff of the profane, the mirth of feasts, and the song of the drunkard. “Despisers of “them that are good,” is a common character of men “in the perilous times.”

Equally despised are God’s ambassadors, though God hath said, that he who despiseth them despiseth him. They have too much of the burning and shining light to be esteemed by the children of darkness. It is no restraint on the tongues or on the pens of the seed of the serpent, that a character hath already been thoroughly sifted, and, excepting the mistakes and imperfections, incident to the best, hath, when tried, come forth as gold. It doth not restrain their malignity, that one hath gained and preserved the esteem and love of good men, who have had the best opportunities of familiar and intimate acquaintance with him. Distinguished zeal for the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom; or indeed any degree of success in the conversion of men who have proved their sincerity, by bringing forth, for a series of years, fruits meet for repentance; are provocations, which the subjects of the prince of darkness cannot forgive. Such instruments of God’s glory must be exposed to ridicule or detestation, by false pictures of their

their sentiments and conduct, and by ascribing, without evidence, their best actions to the basest motives. —The Sabbath is valued by true Christians, as a day set apart for special communion with God in his ordinances, and as a type of their eternal rest in heaven. But so far are the wicked from calling it “the holy of the Lord, and honourable,” that they habitually profane it, by thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words, and finding their own pleasures as often as it returns. So far from esteeming it a delight, they account all the work of the Sabbath both tedious and burdensome. Yea, as if it were their object to distinguish themselves by a deliberate and open contempt of the Almighty, the day which he hath set apart for his honour, and the hours employed by others in worshipping Him who liveth for ever and ever, are devoted by them to pay the prince of darkness the acceptable homage of chambering and drunkenness, of rioting and wantonness; if they do not give him the homage besides, of scoffing at every thing serious and sacred, cursing the godly, and blaspheming their Maker.

I am sorry to add, that this contempt of God hath publicly appeared, when dreadful judgments, partly inflicted, and partly threatened, have called us in a peculiar manner to stand in awe of his Majesty, and to shelter ourselves from his wrath. Is not the judgment denounced against Egypt in some measure inflicted upon us^{*}? Are there no disputes between rulers and subjects; no jealousies between North and South Britons; no fierce conten-

D d 2

tions

^{*} Isaiah xix. 2.

tions between Britain and her colonies ^u; and between one colony and another? And can a kingdom divided against itself stand? Greater judgments are threatened. We are assured by the highest human authority, that we are in danger of war and pestilence. Yet we are little impressed with our critical and alarming circumstances. We may behold our picture in the striking account of the security and dissipation of the Jews, when, in good Hezekiah's reign, they were threatened with destruction by Sennacherib: "In that day did the Lord God of
" hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to
" baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and be-
" hold, joy and gladness; slaying oxen, and killing
" sheep; eating flesh, and drinking wine ^v." God grant that the sentence pronounced upon them (ver. 14.) may not be our portion, "That this iniquity
" shall not be purged from us till we die!" But what if we are chargeable with a greater iniquity? I speak not of crowding places of public amusement at such a time, especially those entertainments of the theatre, the unlawfulness of which, at any time, has been ably argued by respectable writers, both of our own and of the Episcopal communion. I speak not of attacks on the characters of faithful ministers of Christ. As if all this were not iniquity, conversion, the new birth, and the influences of the Spirit, must be jeered and derided on the stage, with a heaven-daring profanity, which, one would think, must shock every good Christian. Many, alas! both of the Presbyterian and Episcopal denomination, as if the
existence

^u This sermon was preached some years before the war with North America began.

^v Isaiah xxii. 12.—14.

existence or the influence of the Holy Ghost were no article of their creed; and as if regeneration were, in their eyes, unnecessary, nay, ridiculous; have given the sanction of their presence to that impious exhibition^w. Think of the open contempt of God of which Zimri and Cozbi were guilty; when the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and the pious Israelites were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Think on the vengeance that overtook them. Surely in a day of gospel-light, to scoff at the blessed Spirit and his operations in applying the purchased redemption, is a crime still more heinous. Transgressions of the law have been forgiven through the blood of Christ. Despisers of Christ and salvation have been convinced of their sin, and been brought to repentance by the influence of the Spirit: but if men persist in rebelling against and vexing God's Spirit, nay, in ridiculing his person and his influence, what remains for them but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation. I do not say that temporal judgments shall overtake them. God may spare men who are pests to society, when men who are blessings to it are cut off. But He hath an eternity, in which to punish. The sinner, though a hundred years old, is accursed, and shall find that it is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Nor is the danger only theirs, who are the inventors of such evil things. Great is the hazard, that those who partake by their countenance and approbation, of other men's sins, shall also partake of their plagues. We must depart from the tents of those wicked men, if we

^w This alludes to the representation of *the Minor* on the Edinburgh Theatre.

we would not be consumed in their impiety and wickedness.

The tendency of the stage to promote good morals, hath been warmly pleaded. But it is to be hoped, that the disaffection it hath now discovered to heaven's plan for reforming men's tempers and lives, will silence, at least, among us, such ill-founded and ensnaring pretences.

But whence, it may be enquired, is it that the wicked thus contemn God?—It is not as some of them would persuade you, from any superior discernment or penetration which they possess. Impartial observers must acknowledge, that wisdom and piety are by no means inconsistent. Men the most eminent for prudence, extent of knowledge, genius, and taste, have esteemed religion their greatest honour; and an acquaintance with God their most valuable knowledge. That depravity of the understanding, will and affections, which all of us bring into the world with us, is a cause of this contempt, common to us all. Visible things only affect and impress us, and the power and majesty of God are invisible. The godly are often oppressed and afflicted, and sentence is not speedily executed against the workers of iniquity. Hence men ask, “Doth the Lord know; and is there any knowledge in the Almighty: and say in their hearts, “God hath forsaken the earth; and the Lord will “not do no good, neither will he do evil.” The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, so as to be suitably moved or affected by them, because they are spiritually discerned: therefore he despiseth divine things, because he perceives not their hidden glory.

Still,

Still, however, the question remains, why is it, that, in our age, the wilful contempt of God so much and so fatally prevails. I am not preaching to magistrates, ministers, or others who act in public stations, and therefore I need not unfold the baneful effects of their neglect of the means which Providence puts in their power, and which, in faithfulness to their trust, they ought to employ, for preventing or removing that contempt, or at least for restraining the outward indications of it. Nor will a small corner of a discourse suffice to tell how far parents and heads of families are blameable in occasioning the general contempt of religion, by want of proper attention to the religious and moral education of those under their charge.—I shall confine myself to one remark. Men who know not God, naturally form an idea of him from those who profess themselves his servants: and as the conduct of many such is often little of a piece with their profession, and little tends to adorn it, they rashly condemn religion as in itself vain and useless. Many, who assume the honourable appellation of Christians, bring, by their wicked, unhallowed lives, a reproach on the worthy name, by which they are called. Some are busy bodies, not working at all, and while they prate about religion, manifest by their neglect of social and relative duties, that they have denied the faith and are worse than infidels: Others are of a slandering, censorious, and back-biting disposition; and some are unjust and deceitful, ready to deceive and over-reach one another, as often as they can do it with secrecy and impunity. Because of such the name of God is blasphemed among the profane ;

fane; and of all men such had need to remember the awful woe denounced by our Lord against those by whom offences come ^x.—Divisions among professed Christians are another occasion of the contempt of religion. Some points, both of doctrine and practice, are matter of debate and controversy among Christians: and many opinions, evidently false and ridiculous, have been warmly and zealously maintained by learned divines. Hence the wicked conclude, that there is nothing in Christianity certain and uncontroverted; that there is no reality in religion; and that it is the wisest course not to trouble themselves with enquiries concerning it. The malice and rage which they observe in contending parties, one against another, leads them to the opposite extreme of caring for none of the things which serve to agitate them.—The cowardice and faint-heartedness of good men contribute to the increase of this contempt. Carnal policy, and that fear of man which bringeth a snare, make them ashamed of God's words and ways in an adulterous and perverse generation. That they may avoid reproach and ridicule they are not bold in the cause of holiness and virtue; they are not valiant for the truth on the earth, though the wicked are valiant against it: but they dissemble their piety, and restrain their tongue from speaking good. It often happens also, that such of the godly as are more bold and honest, increase the contempt of godliness by their rashness and imprudence. And when this is not the case, the smallness of their number, their low stations in life, and their mean outward circumstances, make their good example to be little regarded;

^x Matth. xviii. 6. 7.

ed; while the number, the wealth, the power, and the other outward advantages of the despisers of God, have great influence among the multitude to persuade them to imitate them in their contempt of godliness.—If we have the least spark of piety, shall not the contempt which is thus cast upon God, and the guilt which we have contracted in occasioning it, pierce us with the deepest anguish. The sight of a great man reduced from affluence to meanness and poverty, tenderly affects us; especially if we are nearly related to him, or if our foolish or our improper conduct hath contributed to his misfortunes. And should not our eyes flow with tears when we consider that it is the Great and Glorious God, who is thus despised, and that our negligence, or our transgressions have had no small influence in producing the occasions which the ungodly have employed to dishonour him.

I cannot conclude without briefly addressing myself to those who condemn God. Ah! that you beheld in a just light the sin, the folly, and the danger of your conduct. What are ye, who are guilty of this contempt? Weak and fleeting mortals; dust and ashes; creatures, who quickly fade as the flower, and wither as the grass; less than nothing, and lighter than vanity. And whom do you thus despise; and against whom do you thus exalt yourselves? Were it against an earthly prince, it were too much: for the wrath of a king is as the messenger of death. But Oh! amazing madness; you despise the Great and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. If one man shall sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if he thus sin against God, who shall entreat for him? To

make a recompense for the indignities you have offered him is impossible. Rivers of tears, yea, rivers of blood, would not expiate the offence. Can you then hide yourselves from the pursuit of avenging Justice? Alas! the darkness cannot cover you; the top of Carmel, or the bottom of the sea, cannot conceal you from God's all-seeing eye. Or can you defend yourselves from the stroke of his vengeance? No more than thorns and stubble can resist a devouring fire. Or, do ye dream that his wrath is so easy and tolerable that ye can support yourselves under it? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day when God shall deal with you? Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger? Who can dwell with devouring flames? Who can abide with everlasting burnings? He whom you despise, shall be your judge. Before his impartial tribunal you must appear. His jurisdiction you cannot except against or decline; and from his righteous sentence, dooming you to endless happiness or to endless misery, no appeal can lie. What excuse will you then make, when sisted before his awful throne? You cannot plead ignorance that such and such things were a contempt of God. You had reason, you had conscience, you had the sacred oracles to instruct you, and you might have known if you would, what the guilt of contemning God is. Nor can you plead, that too costly sacrifices were required; that unreasonable restraints were laid upon you; or that you were enjoined to do any thing mean, dishonourable, or against your true interests. There is no service equally honourable or profitable, as the service of God. Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple,

in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. Them who honour God, God will honour : but they who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Ere long, every mask, and varnish, and disguise, shall be removed ; and the excellency or baseness of human characters and conduct shall be displayed, in full view, to an assembled world. Ere long, they who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting glory, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father ; and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against God ; whose worm dieth not ; whose fire shall not be quenched ; and who shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

Consider this, ye who forget and despise God, lest he tear you in pieces when there shall be none to deliver.

SERMON X.



ON THE VIEWS OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST WHICH
PRODUCE HUMILIATION AND PENITENCE.



ISAIAH vi. 5.

THEN SAID I, WOE IS ME, FOR I AM UNDONE; BECAUSE I AM A MAN OF
UNCLEAN LIPS; AND I DWELL IN THE MIDST OF A PEOPLE OF UN-
CLEAN LIPS; FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING, THE LORD OF
HOSTS.

THESE things, as we are told by an inspired Apo-
stle, ^a said Esaias, when he saw the glory of Christ
and spake of him. He saw, in a vision, Jesus, the
Mediator, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up,
far above all thrones and dominions, and principal-
ties and powers; angels in heaven, even the highest
order of them, worshipping him with the profound-
est humility, and veiling their faces before him;
while this lower world was filled and beautified with
the brightest displays of his glory. Struck with the
sight, he cries out, as in our text, “*Woe is me, for I*
“*am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I*
“*dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine*
“*eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*”

But

^a Isaiah xii. 41.

But was it only the outward splendour of the representation which thus affected Esaias? By no means. The Jews had as remarkable displays of the Divine glory in that kind. They were brought to ^b “*a mountain that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the words should not be spoken to them any more; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.*” But after having been witnesses of all those awful displays of the majesty of God, they remained a proud, hard-hearted, stiff-necked generation. We must therefore conclude, that Esaias beheld a glory in the kingdom of Christ, and in the sufferings whereby that kingdom was purchased, which neither the eye of sense, nor the natural imagination of man can perceive there. He contemplated the glory which the worldly eye cannot discern, by the faith which is the evidence of things not seen, as well as by the inspiration of God. And such views as his were, are, in a certain degree, common to every good man, and produce in every saint, some portion or degree of the same penitent and humble affections. I shall, therefore, take occasion from this passage of Scripture,

I. To represent the glory, which every true saint beholds in Jesus Christ.

II. To explain the peculiar manner in which the saints behold the glories of “*the King, the Lord of hosts.*”

III. To

^b Heb. xii. 18. 19. 21.

III. To illustrate the tendency of such views of the great Redeemer, to promote the various exercises of penitence and self-abasement.

I. I am to attempt to give some idea of the glory, which every true saint beholds in Jesus Christ.—And

1. The saints behold the Son of God undertaking, and, in the fulness of time, accomplishing the work of our redemption. They see him as *‘The brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of his person, possessed of the same perfections as the Eternal Father.* But at the same time they see his infinite Majesty sweetened, and advanced by incomprehensible love. Though, before all ages, he ^d was *One brought up by the Father, and was daily his delight: yet, even then, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.* And as Divine love could not otherwise have been directed to us, consistently with the honour of God’s government, he voluntarily becomes our surety and substitute, to obey the law of God in our room and stead, and to suffer the penalty due to our transgressions. “*Lo! he says* ^e, *I come: In the volume of thy book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.*” And how cheerfully did he fulfil his undertaking ^f? “The word is made flesh, and dwells among us ^g.” “He who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, takes on him the form of a servant, makes himself of no reputation, and is found in fashion as a man.” This fact the believer contemplates with amazement. “Ye know, says Paul ^h,
“the

^c Heb. i. 3.

^d Prov. viii. 30. 31.

^e Psal. xl. 7. 8.

^f John i. 14.

^g Philip. ii. 6. 7. 8.

^h 2 Cor. viii. 9.

“ the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though
 “ he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we,
 “ through his poverty, might be rich.” The Son of
 God who has ⁱ the heaven for his throne, and the
 earth for his footstool, would, nevertheless, prepare
 himself a dwelling with the humble and contrite heart.
 And for this purpose, ^j “ for as much as the children
 “ were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself,
 “ likewise, takes part of the same.” Here was a
 condescension worthy of God! And, indeed, it was
 the Son of God alone, who could stoop so low.

But the saint views Jesus besides, as actually pay-
 ing the price of our redemption. ^k “ He was wound-
 “ ed for our transgressions, he was bruised for our
 “ iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon
 “ him; that we, through his stripes, might be heal-
 “ ed.” In his sufferings the carnal eye can discern
 nothing but weakness and shame. But how different
 the conceptions of a saint! ^l *God forbid, says he, that*
I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
^m Christ crucified appears to him, “ *the wisdom of God*
“ and the power of God.” “ He ⁿ *sees Jesus, who was*
“ made for a little, lower than the angels,” that he might
 be rendered capable of “ *the suffering of death, then in*
“ a special manner, crowned with glory and honour,
“ when, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every
“ man.” What a glory was it to purchase salvation to
 an innumerable multitude of apostate creatures! and
 what a glory to bear that load of guilt, without sinking
 under it, which would have sunk a whole world in
 misery! ^o Now was the Son of man glorified, and
 God

ⁱ Isa. lxvi. 1.^j Heb. ii. 14.^k Isa. liii. 5.^l Gal. vi. 14.^m 1 Cor. i. 24.ⁿ Heb. ii. 9.^o John xiii. 31.

God was glorified in him. For how well did it become him ^p for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings? Here ^q mercy and truth met together: righteousness and peace kissed each other. The honour of the divine government is secured while multitudes of rebels are forgiven. Justice has its full demands on the Surety, and mercy a free extension to the offender. And then a sure foundation is laid for ^r glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men.

2. The saints contemplate the exalted Redeemer, calling and entreating sinners to accept of the benefits of his purchase as the free gift of God: or, in other words, proclaiming himself able to save to the uttermost, every sinner, however vile and unworthy, who will give credit to his gracious declaration. What a glory does he perceive in such texts as these! ^s “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved. ^t Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. ^u Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.” —An earthly prince could not, consistently with his honour, publish a general edict of indemnity, not only to those who have already rebelled against him, but to those who should afterwards rebel. But we behold the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, proclaiming

^p Heb. ii. 10.^q Psal. lxxxv. 10.^r Luke ii. 14.^s Mark xvi. 15. 16.^t Acts xiii. 38. 39.^u Rev. iii. 20.

a full and free pardon to all, in every age, who shall believe on his Son. How brightly does his mercy shine! Nor is his justice violated; pardon being offered us through him, who has completely satisfied its utmost demands.

3. The saints behold the great Redeemer “ setting up that kingdom which shall never be destroyed;” taking possession of those by his Spirit, whom he hath purchased with his blood; and adorning and beautifying them with his own image. I am led to observe this by the song of the Seraphim, in the 3d verse of this chapter: “ *Holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.* ” God “ *that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth,* ” will no longer be confined to his house at Jerusalem, or any other “ *temple made with hands:* ” but will make every corner of the earth an habitation of his glory, and raise himself temples in the most alienated hearts. The soul of man was originally the temple of God: But man having defiled it by sin, the glory of God forsook his temple. And it was inconsistent with the character of God to return, where he had been thus despised and dishonoured, till some due reparation had been made to his violated name and authority. The curse is therefore pronounced and executed, that the Spirit of God should be withheld from man. And thus the place where once *God dwelt*, becomes *the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean bird.*—But “ Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for a us; behold the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, and they receive the pro-

† F f

inised

* Acts xvii. 24.

w Gal. iii. 13. 14.

mised spirit through faith. He who ^x poured out his soul unto death, divides a portion with the great, and divides the spoil with the strong. ^y The captives of the mighty are taken away; the prey of the terrible are delivered. ^z The Gospel being preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, ^a Jesus is made the head of the heathen; and a people whom he had not known serve him. As soon as they hear of him they obey him: strangers submit themselves unto him. A flame of divine love is kindled in the heart, which was not only unmeet for the communion of God, but completely disaffected to him. The noblest powers of the soul were, a little before, alienated to the service of the most despicable idols. But what a glorious change does the Spirit of God make when he re-enters the soul, and ^b brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ? Jesus, taking his seat in the throne of the heart, says, ^c Behold I make all things new: and at his command, ^d instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree; and instead of the briar comes up the myrtle-tree. Those, whose minds were most deformed, become ^e all-glorious within, and ^f beautiful through Christ's comeliness, not only through his righteousness imputed to them; but through that amiable divine temper which they derive from him. What a glorious prince must he be, who can thus enlarge his empire, by transforming into friends and servants, his most inveterate enemies; and who can impress such a glory and excellence

^x Isa. liii. 12.^y Isa. xlix. 25.^z 1 Pet. i. 12.^a Psal. xviii. 43. 44.^b 2 Cor. x. 5.^c Rev. xxi. 5.^d Isa. lv. 13.^e Psal. xlv. 13.^f Ezek. xvi. 14.

lence on all his subjects! If ^e in the multitude of people is the king's honour, how honourable will Jesus appear, when ^h all kings shall bow down before him, and all nations shall serve him? Or, if ⁱ righteousness exalteth a nation, and consequently tends to the honour of their prince, will not Jesus appear glorious when his people ^j shall be all righteous, all lovely, ^k each one resembling the children of a king?

4. The saints behold, with awful reverence, the majesty of Christ, when those who have heard the Gospel, but ^l have not received the truth in the love of it, are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. This is a natural remark from the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, compared with John xii. 41.; and other scriptures represent things in the same light, and affirm this to happen, even when the effusions of the Spirit are most plenteous. When ^m healing and reviving virtue is put into the waters of the sanctuary in the most remarkable degree, still there are miry places and marshes, which shall not be healed, but shall be given to salt. What terror should this strike into the minds of those who have long sat under a most affecting or awakening ministry; or who have even felt the convincing influence of the Spirit under it; and who have, notwithstanding, misimproved both the one and the other! Should they not tremble lest this sentence should be pronounced on them: ⁿ “ They are joined to their
“ idols, let them alone; ^o because I would have pur-
“ ged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt
“ not be purged any more, till I have caused my
F f 2 “ fury

^e Prov. xiv. 28.

^h Psal. lxxii. 11.

ⁱ Prov. xiv. 34.

^j Isa. lx. 21.

^k Judges viii. 18.

^l 2 Thess. ii. 10.

^m Ezek. xlvii. 9. 10. 11.

ⁿ Hos. iv. 7.

^o Ezek. xxiv. 13.

“fury to rest upon thee.”—The goodness and loving kindness of God is immense; but the exercise of that goodness is within certain limits prescribed by his adorable wisdom. ^p He waits that he may be gracious: but he is a God of judgment, and, therefore, blessed are they that wait for him. There is a critical season, which men are concerned to improve: ^q because, to every purpose, there is time and judgment, the misery of man is great; ^r for man also knows not his time. They remember not, ^s in this their day, the things which belong to their peace; and thus, salvation is for ever hid from their eyes. ^t The Spirit will not *always strive* with man. Though He is ^u the Spirit of grace, and delights to communicate his gracious influence, yet men “may do despite to him” in such a manner, that he may utterly forsake them. Men having ^v rebelled and vexed the Holy Spirit, he turns to be their adversary, and fights against them. Men having resisted his motions, rebelled against the light, and given themselves up to the government of their sensual inclinations, in many cases he retires from them, never to return. They are left in the most uncomfortable, and hopeless condition. For though God has not bound himself to withhold for ever, or in every instance his effectual grace even from such men, yet he hath given them the most direct and awful warnings of what they have reason to fear. ^w “*To him that hath shall be given; but from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.*” ^x “*They would none of my counsel: they despised all my*”
“*reproof.*”

^p Isa. xxx. 18.^q Eccles. viii. 6.^r Eccles. ix. 12.^s Luke xix. 42.^t Gen. vi. 3.^u Heb. x. 29.^v Isa. lxiii. 10.^w Matt. xxv. 29.^x Prov. i. 30. 31.

“reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way; and be filled with their own devices.” He who is ^y a sanctuary to his people, is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to his obstinate rejectors. ^z He was set for the fall, as well as the rising again of many in Israel. And as he himself expresses it, ^a *for judgment came he into the world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.* ^b O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!—I now go on,

II. To explain the peculiar manner in which the true saints behold the glories of the King, the Lord of hosts.—For it may be asked, Do not the greater part of professed Christians know and believe what has now been represented? And yet how far is their knowledge from producing that penitent and humble disposition which Isaiah here expresses.—I answer in the general: Wicked men may imagine that they know these things; but they deceive themselves. For ^c it is life eternal to know the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent: And ^d whosoever sinneth hath not seen Jesus, neither known him.—But, more particularly, I observe,

I. That the saints, having the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, behold a glory and excellency, and taste a sweetness in divine things, which other men cannot and do not perceive.

^y Isa. viii. 14.

^z Luke ii. 34.

^a John ix. 39.

^b Rom. xi. 33.

^c John xvii. 3.

^d 1 John iii. 6.

perceive. In this sense ^e the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. It is those alone, who are spiritual, who can ^f behold the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, and ^g who can truly taste and see that God is good. Others may talk about these things, but they know just as much of their intrinsic glory, as a blind man really knows of colours, or a deaf man of sounds; although they may learn from theory to discourse scientifically of both. The world seeth me no more, said Christ to his disciples, ^h but ye see me. There is a beauty and a glory in the Redeemer, an incomparable excellency and sweetness in the scheme of salvation through him, which, if universally perceived, would draw all men to him. But the bulk of mankind are ⁱ alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their minds.

2. The saints, and the saints alone, are spiritually convinced of the reality and certainty of the great doctrines of the Gospel. They do not look on the glorious things represented there as matters of doubtful speculation, but as undoubted and indisputable truths. The greater part of unregenerated sinners are not convinced of the threatenings of God's law. ^j Wherefore doth the wicked man condemn God? He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not requite it. ^k The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God

^e 1 Cor. ii. 14.^f Isa. xxxv. 2.^g Psal. xxxiv. 8.^h John xiv. 19.ⁱ Eph. iv. 18.^j Psal. x. 13.^k Psal. xxxvi. 1.

God before his eyes. ¹ Because God keeps silence, worldly men think him altogether such an one as themselves—and no unconverted sinner truly or sincerely believes the Gospel. For ^m “who-
 “soever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, saith
 “the Apostle, is born of God;” and our Lord tells his disciples, ⁿ “The Father himself loveth you,
 “because ye have loved me, and have believed that
 “I came out from God.” A real persuasion of this kind is saving faith.—It is true, natural or unregenerated men may have a strong persuasion of the same things, arising from their habits or their education, as the Mahometans have of the authority of their Alcoran. Nay, they may even yield an assent to them founded on rational arguments, as ^o “*many*
 “*of the Jews believed on Christ’s name, when they saw*
 “*the miracles which he did,*” whom yet Christ knew to be destitute of grace. But this is not the foundation of the conviction of which I now speak. A real saint is very often incapable of examining the rational arguments on which his faith is founded. And though it were otherwise, the best arguments from reason, are incapable of raising the faith of a Christian to that full assurance, which it sometimes reaches, and which we find expressed in such texts as these following: ^p “We believe and are sure that
 “thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God:
 “^q I know whom I have believed, and am persua-
 “ded that he is able to keep that which I have com-
 “mitted to him against that day: ^r And we have
 “seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to
 “be

¹ Psal. l. 21.^m 1 John v. 1.ⁿ John xvi. 27.^o John ii. 23.^p John vi. 69.^q 2 Tim. i. 12.^r 1 John iv. 14. 16.

“ be the Saviour of the world ; and we have known
 “ and believed the love that God hath to us : God
 “ is love.”—Whence is it that the illiterate Christian
 can sometimes triumph thus in his full persuasion,
 when he who has searched most into the rational arguments which establish the truth of the Gospel, often doubts and wavers ? The saint perceives such a transcendant and inexpressible glory in the Gospel, as convinces him at once, that a scheme so glorious could have none but God for its author. He sees in it such distinguishing marks of divinity, as he is persuaded none but God could have impressed on it : and he beholds a glory in Christ which, he is fully convinced, can be found in none but “ the only begotten of the Father.” If all men perceived this glory, and thus ^s *knew the name of Christ, all would put their trust in him.* ^t “ If our Gospel be hid, or if it
 “ fails to produce its proper effect, the full assurance
 “ of faith, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom
 “ the god of this world hath blinded the minds of
 “ them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.” Satan well knows, that if this light shined upon them, unbelief would be as impossible, as it is impossible to doubt that the sun shines, when we perceive its rays, or feel its warmth. It is, therefore, by opening the eyes of the soul to perceive the true glory of the Son of God, and of the Gospel published in his name, that the Spirit of God produces, or enables the saints to exercise all saving faith. ^u God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of

^s Psal. ix. 10.^t 2 Cor. iv. 4.^u 2 Cor. iv. 6.

of Jesus Christ. Christ supernaturally ^v *manifests his name*, or in other words, unveils his glory to the men whom the Father gave him out of the world; and then they know assuredly, that he came out from the Father, and believe that God did send him. Hence, upon Peter's ^w declaring his belief, that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord says to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, "but my Father which is in heaven."

III. I now go on to consider the tendency of such views of the glory of Christ and of the scheme of salvation through him, to promote the various exercises of penitence and self-abasement—And

1. Such views of the great Redeemer will produce deep and serious thoughtfulness about salvation. Had men a realizing conviction of the infinitely glorious things which the Gospel reveals, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. The blessings which the Gospel offers are so great in themselves, and so important to us, that, did we discern their worth and excellence, and were we thoroughly convinced that they are really offered, we could not possibly be indifferent about them. Is it not a contradiction in terms to suppose that we can view God, and Christ, and holiness, as transcendently lovely and desirable, and at the same time, neither love nor admire them? Can rational creatures see these objects as worthy, above all others, to be chosen and adhered to, and yet not find themselves attracted to choose them, and to prefer them to every thing besides?—How natural, nay, how necessary

† G g is

^v John xvii. 6. 7. 8.

^w Matth. xvi. 16. 17.

is it for one, whose mind is divinely enlightened, to argue thus! Is there so transcendent a beauty in Christ, such a ravishing sweetness, and such an intrinsic importance in the salvation which he offers: and yet shall I be for ever separated from this gracious and Almighty Saviour? Shall I be doomed never to taste the *rivers of pleasure* which flow at his right-hand for ever? How shocking, O my soul! how insupportable the thought? Are not the blessings of redemption attainable? And why should not I set myself in earnest to urge my claim to a share in them? God can bestow them on the chief of sinners, and upon me in particular; in a way perfectly consistent with the honour of his government; nay, he is even entreating me to accept of them. Damnation or eternal glories are now awaiting my choice. And can I pretend I have any thing of greater importance to demand my thoughts and cares; any work of such necessity as to make me, for a moment longer, with-hold my attention from it? Let me now give all diligence to make my calling and election sure. Let me strive to enter in at the strait gate; since many shall seek to enter in, who shall not be able. Let me incline mine ear to wisdom, and apply mine heart to understanding. Let me cry after knowledge, and lift up my voice for understanding.

But above all, how will they pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, who remember that redemption was not purchased with corruptible things as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ? Must not men fear and tremble who entertain the least doubt of an interest in Christ, when they behold God's own Son made a sacrifice

sacrifice to his justice, and a public spectacle to angels and men? "Can I," will the believer say, "think it a light matter to offend God, when such offences as mine required the blood of his only Son? Can I think that God looks with indifference on those violations or neglects of duty, for which it pleased him to bruise his well beloved Son? Was imputed guilt thus severely punished in one so dear to God, and one who had never offended him? And shall I imagine that my personal guilt shall expose me to no danger? Were such things done in the green tree? And what then shall be done in the dry? Shall I reject that salvation which was not only preached, but purchased by the Lord, and yet expect to be happy? While yet my day of grace is lengthened out, and my salvation possible, let me bestir myself, lest a promise being left me of entering into rest, I should fall short thereof through unbelief. If ever I was in good earnest about any thing, it becomes me to be so here. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is even now making his last attempt upon my soul, and waiting to see how I shall use his influence for this one time, before he shall finally depart, or cease to strive with me. O let me hear his voice to-day, and no more harden my heart! let me prostrate myself at the footstool of a sovereign God, humbly implore his mercy, and resolve to take no denial."

2. Just views of the glory of Christ, will excite those who receive them to a strict and close examination of their hearts and lives. If we have the happiness to enter into them, we will no longer be able to endure the thought of remaining uncertain about our state or condition before God. The desires of

salvation which I have represented, are incompatible with an easy ignorance, whether we are in a state of nature, or in a state of grace: and, therefore, will lead us to search and try our ways, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to prove ourselves in earnest, whether Christ be in us, or whether we are yet reprobates. They will, at the same time, assist us in our self-examination; for the same light which discovers the Divine glory, serves also to set clearly before us our own unworthiness. And this leads me to observe, that,

3. Such views of the glory of Christ, will produce low and debasing thoughts of ourselves. It was thus with Isaiah in our text: "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." ^y It was thus with Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When we measure perfection by the notions of men, especially when we measure it by the example of the world lying in wickedness, if we escape the grosser pollutions, we naturally imbibe self-conceit and pride. But just sentiments of that God who is glorious in holiness, and of the beauties of holiness which shine in the person of Christ, and in the plan of our salvation through him, will effectually hide pride from man. The haughtiness of man must be humbled, and his loftiness brought low, when God is exalted in his heart. He who before said to God, "I thank thee I am not as other men:" and to man, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," now learns another

ther language: “How contemptible are my attainments, he says, compared with what they ought to be! How small my love, compared with what is due, to an infinitely lovely and loving Redeemer! Surely it is not possible that any who have truly shared in the saving benefits derived from Christ, and who have any just impressions of them, should love him so little as I have loved him; or should offend him so much as I have offended him! What hateful ingratitude is it that I should be so little affected as I have been with that which Jesus hath done and suffered in my room and for my salvation.” Did we, my brethren, behold the beauty and glory of God without a veil? Did we see without any cloud or darkness the glory of Him who died for us, and the wonders of his dying love? Would not our most ardent love, our most elevated praises, our most difficult services, and even our most painful sufferings appear to us as nothing? And would we not confess with Paul, that “we have not yet attained; neither are already perfect.” He cannot be proud, who sees in himself such a degree of depravity and unworthiness, as would have prevented him for ever from enjoying the Divine favour, if the blood of Jesus Christ had not been shed for him: who reflects that if the sovereign grace of God had not purified his heart, it would have for ever remained a mass of corruption; and that even after all his experience of divine grace, there is still a law of sin in his members, warring against the law of his mind, so that he cannot but very imperfectly do the things which he would.

4. Such views of the glory of Christ, and of the scheme of salvation through him, will promote, in the

the mind of a saint, a godly sorrow, and a holy indignation, on account of his personal sins. Shall I cast contempt, he will say, on infinite excellency? Shall I prove myself to be ungrateful to my best friend and kindest benefactor? Alas! how often have I been so! A son honoureth his father; and a servant his master; but though God be a father, I have dishonoured him; though he be a master, I have despised him. And yet, after all, this glorious God is willing to receive me graciously, and to love me freely:—me who have been so unworthy and so wicked! O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of God! Thy thoughts, O God, are not as our thoughts, nor thy ways as our ways. To me the tender mercies of my God have been new every moment. But, ah! what base returns have I made for all his goodness! I have vexed God with my idolatrous heart. I have often done that which he hates; and through my unguarded and unworthy behaviour, that holy name is blasphemed by which I am called. Do I foolish and unwise, thus requite the Lord my God? And after all this, is the Lord ready to give me pardon, to give me grace, to give me every good thing, and to give me the hope of glory at last?—Yea, to give me himself, to become my God for ever and ever, and my guide even unto death! Is this the manner of men, O Lord my God! Surely to me belongeth shame and confusion of face, for all my iniquities. My Redeemer was wounded for my transgressions, and the chastisement was laid on him, which purchased my peace. His soul was sorrowful even unto death. Being in an agony his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Under the sense of
imputed

imputed guilt he suffered this exquisite anguish; and shall I be unaffected, who am chargeable with so many personal offences? Shall I not loath myself, in his sight, for all my iniquities, and for all my abominations? Shall I not mourn for my sins, as one mourneth for a first-born; and be in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for an only son?

5. Such views of the glory of Christ will determine those who receive them, to turn from sin unto God, and, by the grace of God, to devote themselves entirely to his service. Was Jesus, our Passover, sacrificed for us? And shall we not present ourselves to him, “souls, bodies, and spirits, living sacrifices, “holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service?” Our redemption was purchased with his precious blood. We are not our own: we are bought with a price. It is our duty, it is our honour, it is our delight, to glorify Him who paid that price for us, with our bodies and with our spirits, which are his. For our sakes he left the bosom of the Father, veiled the glories of his divinity, and endured the reproaches of men, the rage of Satan, and the wrath of God. For his sake we will cheerfully deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him. Henceforth, O vain and ensnaring world, we will no more be conformed to thee; nor will we hunt after thy unsatisfying pleasures. Worldly enjoyments shall not be our chief ambition, and through Divine strength, the pursuit of them shall not lead us aside from the paths of duty; for we cannot forget that our Lord, the Lord of glory, appeared on earth, in circumstances of meanness and abasement, and had not even where to lay his head. We cannot entertain a favourable thought of
that

that which slew our best friend, our compassionate Saviour. We will deal with sin as sin dealt with him, and steadily crucify that which crucified our dear Redeemer.

6. Such views of the glory of Christ and of the scheme of redemption through him, have a transforming or a sanctifying influence. Indeed, in this way, the whole work of sanctification is begun, carried on, and completed. When men are turned from darkness unto light, they are also turned from the power of Satan to the living God. ^z They know the truth, and the truth makes them free. ^a Having learned Christ, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. ^b Through God's exceeding great and precious promises, they become partakers of a divine nature, escaping the pollutions which are in the world through lust. By similar views of truth, Christians are excited to progress in holiness and virtue. ^c They all, with open face, behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and thus are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus intercedes for them with the Father. ^d "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word "is truth." Nor is this inconsistent with the necessity of supernatural influence, to begin and carry on this good work. It is no dishonour to the Spirit of Christ, that he deals with us as with rational creatures, and by enlightening our understandings, captivates our hearts, and forms us in the mould of the

^z John viii. 32.

^a Eph. iv. 20.—24.

^b 2 Pet. i. 4.

^c 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^d John xvii. 17.

the Gospel, and of its glorious Author. Even in heaven holiness shall be thus perfected. When the Saviour “appears, ^e we shall be like him, for we shall “see him as he is.”

7. Such views of the glory of Christ, and of the scheme of salvation through him, wean the heart and affections from things below, and place them on things spiritual and divine. If God requires us to withdraw our affections from things naturally dear to us, and even to renounce them at his call, the command is not severe or unkind, for he proposes to our choice objects infinitely more excellent, and better worthy of our warmest desires. If we ^f hear-ken, and consider, and incline our ear to his condescending offers; if, for his sake, we forget even our own people, or our father’s house; that King who is fairer than the children of men, shall greatly desire and reward us. ^g They who forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mothers, or wife, or children, for the sake of Christ’s name, shall receive an hundred fold even in this life. They shall attain the pure and spiritual enjoyments, which shall more than compensate the loss of their most valuable earthly comforts. The contemplation of Zion’s King in his beauty, is a source of the most transcendent and elevating joys. It was so to David under a far darker dispensation than ours. ^h “The glory of the “Lord shall endure for ever: The Lord shall rejoice “in his works. He looketh on the earth and it “trembleth: He toucheth the hills and they smoke. “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live. I will “sing praise unto my God while I have a being.

† H h

“ My

^e 1 John iii. 2.

^f Psal. xlv. 10. 11.

^g Matth. xix. 29.

^h Psal. civ. 31.—34.

“ My meditation of him shall be sweet : I will be “ glad in the Lord.” The satisfaction which the saint thus tastes in the views of invisible objects, which his faith enables him to receive, strips the things of the present world of their deceitful and bewitching aspects. And hence, too, he can cheerfully bear disappointments, losses, and persecutions ; and solace himself in this, that his chief interests are secure, and that he hath access to joys which the world can neither give nor take away. This was the experience of the primitive Christians. ⁱ For which cause we faint not, they said, for though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day : while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Striking views of the glory of the Redeemer give life and vigour to the grace of hope, or to the longing desires and expectations from which a real saint derives both his stability and his happiness. “ He “ is ^j saved by hope ;” saved from that pursuit of the vanities of this life, as his consolation or his portion, in which other men are entangled and sink into misery : because they know not, and therefore do not relish the superior enjoyments in which alone true happiness can be found. Well might Stephen look upon death without terror, when he ^k saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. It is heaven to be with Jesus, where he is, to behold his glory ; and every Christian habitually prefers his present communion with him, and his hope of dwelling with him at last, to every earthly pursuit and possession.

The

ⁱ 2 Cor. iv. 16. 18.

^j Rom. viii. 24.

^k Acts vii. 56.

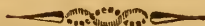
The happiness of those who live in these habits, is placed, where the Lord himself hath placed it in his intercessory prayer for them all. “ Father, I will, “ that they whom thou hast given me, be with me “ where I am ; that they may behold my glory “ which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst me “ before the foundation of the world ¹.”

¹ 1 John xvii. 12.

SERMON XI.



ON AN OPEN AND INTREPID ADHERENCE TO VITAL
CHRISTIANITY.



ROMANS i. 16.

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ; FOR IT IS THE
POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH ;
TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.

ALL who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. The seed of the serpent bears an irreconcilable enmity to the seed of the woman, which always discovers itself in one form or another; and when it is restrained from greater acts of violence, it satisfies, in some measure, its hellish spite, by the slander or reproach with which it follows the genuine disciples of the holy Jesus. A fool's coat is given to their virtues, to render them ridiculous; or their smallest imprudencies are urged as signs of madness or of enthusiasm; or their real faults are employed to wound, through their sides, the cause to which they adhere. They are treated in this manner, by persons who patiently bear much greater excesses on the side of vice, than those for which they persecute them; and who seem to be little dis-
composed,

composed, indeed, by any vices of the world, excepting the cases in which they affect or encroach on their own private interests. But, too much religion those men deem to be so dangerous and so common an extreme, that all their eloquence is employed to display its absurdity, and to run down and expose those individuals to whom they are accustomed to impute it.

Such a Christianity, it must indeed be owned, as that which multitudes of men assume, may, and generally does escape from censure. Men free from gross immoralities, but who act by the same principles, and for the same ends, with those who believe nothing of religion, so far from being reproached, are often followed with high encomiums on account of what is represented as their harmless or inoffensive behaviour; and their example is not seldom recommended, as if it were a pattern of living Christianity. The name of Christian gives no offence, and a form of godliness, when it is separated from the life and power of it, can be easily endured.

But a strict and open adherence to the doctrines, and to the precepts of the Bible; an endeavour to shew that we are fully convinced of their truth and importance; a conduct which supposes us to be animated by another spirit than that which belongs to the world lying in wickedness; an avowed resolution to measure the worth of every object, by its tendency to promote the glory of God, the highest interests of mankind, or our own eternal happiness; a steady and uniform endeavour to regulate the life which we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God; represent a character which seldom fails to open the mouth of censure, or to incur a severe reproach.

Nor

Nor need this surprise us. The Christian's "life is hid with Christ in God." A veil on the hearts of *natural* or worldly men, hinders them from discerning its intrinsic excellence or beauty. "The excellent ones of the earth, in whom is all God's delight," are therefore accounted by them as "the filth and offscouring of all things;" in the same manner as was Christ himself, of whose sufferings it was one distinguished branch, that "he hid not his face from shame and spitting."

The Scriptures abound with examples of those, who, stimulated by the example of the Captain of salvation, and fighting under his banner, have endured trials of cruel mockings; and who have acted a fair and courageous part, when they have experienced most of this severity. Of these, none are more eminent than the example given us by the Apostle Paul, in the words of my text: "*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*"

That we may view these words in their proper light, let us attend to their connection with the preceding verse.

There the Apostle, whose labours had been so abundant in other places, declares his readiness to preach the Gospel at Rome also. In forming such a design, carnal or worldly wisdom might perhaps have suggested to him such a language as the following: "Your preaching in that city, may well render you personally ridiculous, but can certainly answer no valuable purpose. A people of so refined a taste for learning and eloquence as the inhabitants of Rome, will infallibly treat your doctrine
and

“and your message with scorn and contempt.” But the Apostle of the Gentiles had not so learned Christ, as to hearken to such suggestions as these. God had chosen him to know his will, to see that just One, to hear the voice of his mouth, and to be a witness to all men, of what he had seen and heard. “God, who had separated him from his mother’s womb, and called him by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ:” and, lo! he confers not with flesh and blood; is not disobedient to the heavenly vision; and, regardless of the reproach it might draw upon him, cheerfully resolves to preach the faith which he had once persecuted. The considerations which influenced and determined him, our text represents to us: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

From these words, I am naturally led, 1st, To consider the *profession* made by the Apostle, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ:” and, 2dly, To represent the reason he assigns in vindication of it: “For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

I. I begin by considering the Apostle’s profession: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”

Though by the Gospel is sometimes understood the whole scheme of Christianity, including the promises of God, the doctrines of faith, the rules of practice, and the motives enforcing these rules; yet, here,
it

it is to be taken in its more common and confined sense, as signifying the glad tidings of salvation, purchased by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, and freely offered to the chief of sinners. The expression, “to be ashamed,” either expresses the trouble and confusion which the mind feels, when one is concerned at something dishonourable, base, or foolish; or, it supposes a man to act as if he felt these sentiments, although inwardly he does not feel them. The Apostle, therefore, intended to say, that he did not feel, and would not act as if he felt any uneasiness of mind, on account of his avowed regard and attachment to the Gospel. It would, however, be doing him an injury, to suppose that this was the whole of his meaning. By a figure, usual in sacred writ, denying one thing, he strongly and emphatically insinuates its contrary: “I glory and make my boast of the Gospel, and esteem it above every thing else.”—To be more particular,

(1.) The Apostle meant by the declaration in this text, that he saw in the Gospel, or in a strict adherence to it, no ground of shame. Assured of the religion he professed, he could say with Peter, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty^a.” “For he received not the Gospel of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ^b.” Nor was he less sensible of the importance of the Gospel. He knew that true happiness was placed in the favour of God, in communion with him, and in conformity to his image;

^a 2 Pet. i. 16.

^b Gal. i. 12.

image; and that to all these blessed attainments Christ was the only way. We may suppose him to have used such language as this: “ Were all sublu-
 “ nary enjoyments united, compared with these
 “ blessings, they would be lighter than vanity; and
 “ were all the miseries of this life collected together,
 “ they would be inconsiderable, when weighed, or
 “ compared with the torments which await those
 “ who despise the blessings of redemption. I have,
 “ therefore, no reason to be ashamed of my labours
 “ for the propagation of the Gospel: for I cannot
 “ lay more stress upon it, and cannot be more con-
 “ cerned for its success, than its certainty and its in-
 “ trinsic importance unquestionably deserve.”

(2.) He means to declare, that he thought the cause of the Gospel so glorious and excellent, that any shame which it might bring upon him was honourable and advantageous. “ Well may I esteem the
 “ reproach of Christ greater riches than all the trea-
 “ sures of this earth, when I look forward to the
 “ recompense of reward ^c. Despicable as I may ap-
 “ pear in the eyes of blinded men, the God before
 “ whom I must one day stand or fall, accepts my
 “ service, and approves my fidelity. In the midst of
 “ contempt and reproach, I now confess Christ be-
 “ fore men. Ere long, the day shall dawn, when
 “ He also shall confess me before his Father who is
 “ in heaven. The tongue of the scorner may smite
 “ me, but I am supported by the testimony of a
 “ good conscience. I am happy, for the Spirit of
 “ God and of glory resteth upon me. If tribula-
 “ tions abound, comforts do much more abound.
 “ Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in re-

† I i

“ proaches,

^c Heb. xi. 26.

“proaches, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong ^d.”

(3.) He declares his resolution, that he would in no instance allow himself to act as if he were ashamed of the Gospel. “I will not give others occasion to think me ashamed of it. I will not shun opportunities of testifying my regard to it. I will not, to screen my profession from reproach, conceal or disguise even such of its doctrines as are most commonly despised or ridiculed. The Gospel ever appears most fair and lovely in her native simplicity. Let me rather be accounted an enthusiast or a madman, for teaching the plain truths of Christ, than avoid the censures of men by handling the word of God deceitfully, or by endeavouring to adapt it as much as possible to fashionable or to popular ideas. I cannot stoop to court honour, by compliances so base and mean. Renouncing all the hidden arts of darkness and dishonesty ^e, I will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, and if called to it, I will speak of God’s testimonies before kings, and not be ashamed ^f.”

(4.) He intimates that the shame to which he knew himself to be exposed, so far from discouraging him, spurred him on to greater earnestness in the service of the Gospel. He resolved to follow Christ in bad as well as good report, and the more he should be ridiculed or persecuted for adhering to religion, the more vigorously did he determine to prepare himself for its defence.

Happy the Christians, who can make this noble use or improvement of the persecutions, or of the scoffings of the profane! To stand by religion, when it

^d 1 Cor. xii. 10.

^e 2 Cor. iv. 2.

^f Psal. cxix. 46.

it is fashionable, is not difficult. But, to take part with the Lord against the powers of the world, to conform ourselves to his institutions, when they are opposite to the customs which prevail; to dare to be singularly good; and with a well-grounded, though humble confidence, to be able to say, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," supposes a state and a vigour of mind, which is by no means an easy or a common attainment. Such heroic virtue is only produced by the lively exercise of a strong faith, an ardent love, and an habitual sense of the Divine presence: and these cannot fail to produce it. Our private affections will most appear, and work with the greatest effect and vigour, when an imminent danger threatens some valuable interest of the persons whom we regard or esteem; or, when the tongue of slander attempts to disturb their happiness, or to blacken their characters. The effects of genuine love to our God and Saviour must be similar. They were so with David. When men made void God's law, his zeal was not cooled, nor was his courage blunted. Nay, his devout affections and his pious resolutions were more sharpened and inflamed. "Therefore," says he, "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Therefore, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way ⁵."

(5.) When the Apostle Paul declares, that "he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," he intimates very forcibly that he gloried in it, and that he made his boast of it. He sees a peculiar lustre in that, which appeared base and contemptible to a

I i 2

75, 114
126
blinded

blinded world. He views the plan of redemption exhibited in the Gospel, as the chief, and most glorious of the works of God. How often, and with what energy does he express these sentiments!—"What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ^h." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ ⁱ." Reckoning it his highest honour to serve God in the Gospel of his Son, he cries out:—"To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ ^j." He glories not only in his attachment to Jesus, but in the sufferings to which it exposed him: and he reckons it among the privileges of the Christians of those times, "That to them it was given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ^k." The prospect of parting with every thing dear to him in this world; and even with life itself, in the cause of his Master, was not dreadful to him. He rejoices in it himself, and he calls others to rejoice with him.—"Yea, and if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause, also, do ye joy and rejoice with me ^l."

II. I now proceed to consider the reason assigned by the Apostle, why his inward sentiments, and his outward conduct, with regard to the Gospel, were such as I have represented them. It was the Gospel of

^h Phil. iii. 7. 8.

ⁱ Gal. vi. 14.

^j Eph. iii. 8.

^k Phil. i. 29.

^l Phil. ii. 17. 18.

of Christ,—that which he felt and knew to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Had he esteemed the Gospel to be of small importance; had he imagined that it contained nothing, which reason could not sufficiently discover; had he had no sense of his obligations to the Great Author of the Gospel; or had any fearful apprehensions possessed him, that his message would not have been received or listened to, he might have been tempted to indulge a greater coolness. But nothing of this kind took place. The most opposite views and persuasions directed and animated him.

1. It was the *Gospel* of which he was not ashamed: the Gospel whose peculiar glory it was to bring life and immortality to light, and to reveal to the church the mystery which was hid from ages and generations. It was no mean or trifling cause in which he exerted himself; but a cause of the first importance to the present and eternal interests of men; a service, in which it was his chief object to point out to his fellow-sinners “the one thing needful;” compared with which, every thing else is of small moment indeed. Well might his soul be conscious of a glorious elevation, while he was devoting his life to publish, in the most impressive form, the glad tidings of great joy; viz. That to rebels against Heaven is opened a way to reconciliation with their offended Sovereign, and to full and durable felicity in the possession of his favour.

2. It was the Gospel of Christ of which the Apostle was not ashamed.—The great message of the Gospel was, that Jesus, being anointed and authorised by the Father, had come to restore sinners, of Adam’s race, to holiness and happiness by his blood,
by

by his merits, and by the influence of his grace ; and that all the ends of the earth were entitled and required to look to him for salvation. It was a declaration of what had been done and suffered on earth by the man who was God's fellow ; and what blessings he is willing to bestow from heaven, where he is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. To spread the glories of his name was, in Paul's view, both an honourable and a delightful office. The love of a crucified Jesus powerfully constrained him to live not to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again. Admiring the heights, and depths, and length, and breadth, of the love of God in Christ ; and deeply sensible of his own unworthiness, he cannot find words sufficient to testify his gratitude and thankfulness. After his most difficult services, and most costly sacrifices, he knows that he owes infinitely more to the great Redeemer of the world. He accounts it a distinguished privilege to be entrusted with the care of those for whom the Lord Jesus shed his blood. He resolves faithfully and diligently to keep that which had been committed to his trust. And in the prospect of successive and aggravated afflictions, for the sake of the Gospel, he heroically declares his firm and intrepid resolution to abide by his Master's service in all events. " None
" of these things move me, (he says) neither count
" I my life dear unto myself ; so that I might finish
" my course with joy, and the ministry which I
" have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gos-
" pel of the grace of God ^m."

3. The

^m Acts xx. 24.

3. The Gospel, of which the Apostle declares himself not to be ashamed, “*is the power of God unto salvation.*” It might be preached in weakness, and in fear, and in much tremblingⁿ. It might be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Nevertheless, “to them that were called, both Jews and Greeks, it was, indeed, the wisdom of God, and the power of God^o.” Never were these divine perfections employed for kinder purposes; and never were they more gloriously displayed. In the whole plan of redemption, the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of man is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted. All the salvation is of grace; of the free unmerited love of God the Father, as its spring; of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, for our sakes, became poor, as its price; and of the gracious influence of the Spirit of Christ, as the power by which it is brought home to us. His thoughts rise in transport when he reflects on the exceeding greatness of Divine Power towards them who believe: and the more such thoughts prevail, the more he is animated to ascribe to God the glory due to his name; and to make it the chief object of his life, that God, in all things, may be glorified. He longs that other men may feel the benign influence of those glorious truths, which had given light, and life, and comfort to him.

4. The Apostle knew that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation; *to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* The Almighty power, which translated him from darkness to light, could work a similar change on the most prejudiced and stubborn
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ⁿ 1 Cor. ii. 3.

^o 1 Cor. i. 23. 24.

of his hearers. No description of men, at Rome, could be more averse to Christianity than he himself once was, whom yet the power of the Lord Jesus had effectually determined to embrace it. A like power had already attended his ministrations, and those of his fellow-apostles; and the word of God preached by them, had proved “ quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow, operating as a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart ^p.” Hence, he could triumphantly say, “ The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ^q.”

Yet, glorious as these displays of Divine Power are in themselves, they fell far short of the full extent of the promise made to the great Messiah, by the Father : “ It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth ^r.” The God who had promised was faithful to perform; and Omnipotence could surmount all opposition. The Apostle might be ignorant when the promises were to be completely accomplished, or how far he might be employed as an instrument in fulfilling them. It was not for him to know the times or the seasons, which the Father had put in his own power.

Yet

^p Heb. iv. 12.

^q Heb. x. 4.

^r Isa. xlix. 6.

Yet as he had received power from the Holy Ghost to bear witness for God, not only in Jerusalem and in Judea, but to the uttermost ends of the earth, he resolved to carry his Master's message even to Rome; there to plant and water, and humbly to look up to Him, who alone could give the increase.

Ardently as he wished the salvation of his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh; yet, being specially appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, the ancient promises most particularly attracted his attention, which related immediately to them.

“ Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for
 “ thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the
 “ earth for thy possession ^s.” “ Thou hast made me
 “ the head of the heathen; a people whom I have
 “ not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear
 “ of me they shall obey me: the strangers shall sub-
 “ mit themselves unto me ^t. Men shall be blessed
 “ in him; all nations shall call him blessed ^u.” These
 promises would encourage the Apostle's hopes, that,
 difficult as it appeared in the eyes of men, the learn-
 ing and policy of Rome itself, might bow to the
 cross of Christ.—You, my brethren, move in a
 lower and less extensive sphere than his was. But
 you have families, and neighbours, and friends, of
 whose esteem and affection, you may have such a
 hold, that a word spoken in season may win their
 attention, or effectually turn their thoughts to the
 Gospel of Christ. “ In the morning, (said Solo-
 mon) sow thy seed, and in the evening with-hold
 “ not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether

† K k

“ shall

^s Psal. ii. 8.

^t Psal. xviii. 43. 44.

^u Psal. lxxiii. 17.

“ shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they
 “ shall be alike good ^v.”

5. The Apostle knew the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. Isaiah had uttered the following predictions of Him who was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles: “ A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoaking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgment unto truth ^w.” “ Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation : ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end ^x.” Micah had prophesied in similar terms : “ He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the Majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide : for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth ^y.” Jesus himself had said, “ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out ^z. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand ^a. Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ^b.” How would the impression of these solemn assurances, on which he relied implicitly, support the Apostle under all the difficulties and dangers of his service ! “ The powers of darkness, (would he say to himself) shall never be able to destroy the weakest believer of the Gospel which I preach, who hath committed himself to the Son of God, as to a faithful Creator and Redeemer. Not one sinner, really converted
 “ by

^v Eccles. xi. 6.

^w Isa. xlii. 3.

^x Isa. xlv. 17.

^y Mic. v. 4.

^z John vi. 37.

^a John x. 27. 28.

^b Matth. xvi. 18.

“ by my ministry, shall ultimately perish. All of
 “ them shall be my joy and crown of rejoicing in
 “ the day of the Lord.”—That these were his senti-
 ments appears from all his letters to the primitive
 churches. Thus he tells the Corinthians: “ I thank
 “ my God always on your behalf, for the grace of
 “ God which is given you by Jesus Christ, who
 “ shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may be
 “ blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ ^c.”
 And he tells the Philippians, “ I thank my God,
 “ upon every remembrance of you, for your fel-
 “ lowship in the Gospel, from the first day until
 “ now; being confident of this very thing, that he
 “ which hath begun a good work in you will per-
 “ form it unto the day of Jesus Christ ^d.”

If each of these considerations, separately taken,
 was powerful, how irresistible their force when they
 are all united! How would they excite trust in God;
 love to the Redeemer; high and admiring thoughts
 of the glories of the Gospel; contempt of that ho-
 nour which cometh of man; and a firm resolution
 to renounce every thing for the cause of Christ!

A few reflections shall close this discourse.

(1.) How base and criminal is their conduct who
 accommodate to the prevailing taste their manner of
 professing the Gospel! The plain simplicity of the
 Gospel, or its sublime mysteries; or the strictness and
 spirituality of the laws, which it teaches us to obey,
 are opposite to their taste, who are esteemed, or who
 affect to be called, men of wisdom: and, to preserve
 a reputation among them, or to banish from religion
 an unfashionable air, they are meanly relinquished
 or disguised. But let those who allow themselves

to be influenced by such considerations, remember the awful words of our Lord Jesus: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." To resolve that the sentiments and manners of the times shall direct and limit our profession of the doctrines, or our practice of the duties of Christianity, is to give them up to be directed and limited by a world which lieth in wickedness. And are those who are led captive by Satan at his pleasure, or is Satan, their master, entitled to say: Hitherto shall your faith and holiness go and no farther? Do important truths become empty or insignificant speculations, because they are so accounted by men, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded? Are holiness of heart, and circumspect behaviour the same things with being righteous over-much; because they are so represented by those, whose carnal minds are enmity both against the nature and the laws of God?

(2.) What presumption and madness is it to throw ridicule on Christianity, and on those who sincerely profess it! "It is hard to kick against the pricks." Whom do men scorn; and against whom do they exalt themselves, and lift up their eyes on high? Is it not against the Holy One of Israel? "It must needs be, that such offences should come; but woe unto those by whom they come." Their mirth shall be turned into sorrow, and their laughter into mourning; for God himself "will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh."

“cometh.” The day approacheth, when it shall appear, that they, and they alone, were truly wise, who were willing to be accounted fools for Christ Jesus.

(3.) My subject teaches us what is the best resource of a Christian when he is loaded with reproach, and the surest preservative against the temptations which arise from false shame. He who hath felt the influence of the Gospel on his own heart, and hath tasted that the Lord is gracious, prefers one day in God’s courts to a thousand elsewhere, and avoids, at all hazards, that which would expose him to the hidings of God’s face, how much soever it might promote his reputation, or his worldly interest. He knows, he chooses, he cleaves to the things which are more excellent. He perceives the path to present and to eternal felicity : he walks in it : and the scorn and laughter of fools will not turn him aside from it. With him it is a light, or a *little* thing, to be judged of man’s judgment ; for he who judgeth him is the Lord.

“ I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ; for
“ it is the power of God unto salvation, to every
“ one who believeth.”

SERMON XII.

ON INFANT-BAPTISM.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19. ^a

GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.

MY design, in the following discourse, is to prove, that baptism, the initiating seal of the covenant of grace, ought to be dispensed to infants; *First*, from their interest in the covenant made with Abraham; and, *Secondly*, from the command contained in my text.

I. I argue, that infants ought to be baptized, from their interest in the covenant made with Abraham.

In illustration of this argument, I observe,

1. That the covenant, which God was to establish with Abraham and his seed, in which he promises to be their God, was the covenant of grace. The promise of the land of Canaan was only an appendage to that promise. God would have been ashamed to be called Abraham's God, as we are informed, Heb. xi. 16. if he had not prepared for the heirs of promise,

^a This was the last sermon which the Author delivered in public, though it appears that the substance of it was written many years ago.

promise, a better city than any which they could possess in the land of Canaan. Hence, what is represented (Gen. xvii. 4.) “by establishing a covenant” with Abraham, is expressed (Gal. iii. 8.) “by preaching the Gospel” to them. Now, the Gospel contains a free offer of spiritual and heavenly blessings, and actually brings home these blessings to those who receive it with faith.

2. The infant seed of Abraham were comprehended in the covenant which contained spiritual and heavenly blessings; and, therefore, they received the rite of circumcision, as a seal of that covenant. The same covenant-blessing was sealed to them as to Abraham himself. But the possession of the land of Canaan was not sealed to them all; for that possession was never intended for Ishmael, for the children of Keturah, or for Esau. Circumcision, therefore, sealed nothing to them, if it was not to them, as to Abraham, a seal of the righteousness of faith^b. The same thing may be affirmed of Abraham’s descendants, who died in their infancy, and who never possessed the blessings of the Sinai-covenant.

What then is sealed to the infant-seed of Abraham, and to the children of all who are followers of his faith? I reply to this question, That before such infants arrive at the use of reason, they are considered, and are treated by God, as if they were a part of their believing parents; and that, hence, if they die in their infancy, they are fitted for, and are put into possession of the happiness of heaven. I know no other foundation than this, of the confidence expressed by David, and by the Shunamite woman, with regard to the happiness of their deceased infants;

^b Rom. iv. 11.

infants; although other considerations might contribute to confirm it.

3. The infants of believers are still within the covenant of grace; for,

(1.) Infants stand in as much need of the grace of that covenant, and are as capable of it now, as they were in the days of Abraham. And if it were possible to suppose, that they have now no interest in it, we must conceive all of them to perish, since we know no other channel by which the grace of God is conveyed: a sentiment too shocking to be deliberately entertained.

(2.) We are expressly assured, that the blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles; and that those, who are Christ's, are Abraham's seed and heirs, according to the promise^c; and since it was a part of Abraham's blessing, that he could lay claim to God, as the God of his seed, the believing Gentiles may certainly claim the same privilege for their infants also. If the benefit of a charter, containing several privileges, is extended to another society, besides that, to which it was first granted, will it not be presumed, that this second community has a right to all the chartered privileges of the original society, unless in as far as any part of them shall be expressly excepted? But we are no where told, that, though in other respects, the blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles, their children are now excluded from the covenant; or that God no more pledges himself to believers, as he did to Abraham, that he will be the God of their seed.

(3.) Christ is the same, yesterday to them that were under the law; to-day to us who are under the

^c Gal. iii. 14. 27.—29. Rom. iv. 16. 17.

the Gospel ; and for ever to those who shall come after us. So that, if children had originally an interest in the covenant of God, they must have it still ^d. Nay, the privileges of saints, so far from being diminished, are greatly increased by the coming of Christ ^e.

(4.) We read, Rom. ii. 16.—26. that, as some of the Jews were broken off from the olive-tree, and the believing Gentiles were grafted thereon in their room, so at last the Jews were to be grafted in again. It is only said, that some of the branches were broken off ; which plainly supposes, that others of them remained, and still enjoyed their old privileges, of which this was one, that God was to be the God of their seed. But if the believing Jews have that privilege, the believing Gentiles must have it also ; else there would still be a partition wall in the house of God, to divide the Gentile from the Jew ; contrary to the express language of Eph. ii. 14. Farther, we are told, that we Gentiles are grafted in among the natural branches ; and, with them, partake of the fatness of the olive. But how would this be consistent with truth, if believers were now deprived of one of the richest privileges of the Old Testament church. Is there an important part of the blessing of Abraham, which hath not come upon the Gentiles ? And is it, with so mournful an exception as this, that they, who are of faith, are said to be children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise ? On the contrary, it is expressly affirmed of the New Testament church (Isa. lxxv. 23.) “ That they are the seed “ of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with “ them.”

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^d Vid. Acts xv. 11. Heb. xiii. 8. ^e Heb. vii. 22. and viii. 6.

We are told, besides, that the Jews shall be again grafted into their own olive-tree. But, how is it possible that this assertion could be verified, if after their conversion to Christianity, they were not to recover, at least, the full extent of their former privileges? Formerly, they were entitled to believe in God, as the God of their seed. And would not their advantages, as believers, and their privileges in the church of God, be abridged instead of being enlarged, and become extremely different from what they originally were, if under the Gospel, the father alone was understood to be in covenant with God, while the child was excluded from the blessings of the covenant? Would not every pious and tender-hearted parent, who believed this to be the fact, deem himself to be thereby deprived of a most valuable and important privilege, as well as of a source of the most interesting and soothing consolations?

(5.) Another argument may be drawn from the assertion in 1 Cor. vii. 14. where the children of believers are stiled “holy.” Some have attempted to explain this text, as relating entirely to a matrimonial holiness. But the least attention to the argument, with which it is connected, must satisfy every impartial judge, that this could not be the Apostle’s meaning. A doubt had arisen, it seems, among the believing Corinthians, whether a converted wife was obliged to leave her unconverted husband, since the Lord was angry at the Jews for such mixed marriages ^f. To this doubt the Apostle answers, in the 13th and 14th verses, that, in this case, the wife was not to separate from her husband; because,

^f Ezra x. 2. 3. Neh. xiii. 23.

because, whatever the unbelieving husband might be in himself, their co-habitation was approved by God, and was sanctified to the believer; and that God esteemed the children, born of such a marriage, to be fœderally holy, or in covenant with him: holy in the same sense, in which the Jews are called “a holy seed ^g.” According to this interpretation, the Apostle’s reasoning is strong and convincing. But supposing him to speak, as the Anabaptists affirm, of a matrimonial holiness alone; that is, to have asserted no more, than that the children of the marriages in question, were not bastards, but were, lawfully born; his argument would appear to be, to the last degree, lame and inconclusive. How strangely would the passage run, were we to paraphrase it on this hypothesis? “*Separate not from your unbelieving husbands. It is true, indeed, that if both the parties were unbelievers, the marriage would be unlawful, and the children would be bastards. But, one of the parties being a believer, the marriage is lawful, and the children, born of it, are legitimate.*” Could words like these drop from a man of understanding, and much more, from an inspired pen; from the pen of that Apostle, who tells us, that marriage is honourable in all men; and, consequently, that the children, born of marriage, are never bastards. Were legitimacy all the holiness intended by the text in question, the children of infidels are, in this respect, as holy as the children of Christians: whereas, the Apostle speaks of a holiness which no children could have, except one of their parents believed. Surely the Apostle intended his argument to resolve a doubt: and the only doubt, among the

Corinthians, was this, whether wives, when converted, were to leave their unconverted husbands. Had he only told them what they knew before, that the children, which they had already born to such husbands, were no bastards, but legitimate children; how unsatisfactory, and how little to the purpose would his reply have been? The doubt for which his argument was employed, must have been left without a solution.

I add, 4. That infants, being thus visibly in covenant with God, have a right to receive baptism, the initiating seal of the covenant of grace. For,

(1.) It is both irrational and unscriptural to suppose, that those are excluded from the initiating seal, who are not excluded from partaking of the thing which is sealed. Are the church to exclude those whom Christ receives, and whom Christ will save? At the beginning it was not so; for, we read (Acts ii. 47.) “That there were added daily to the “church such as should be saved.” And, therefore, baptism, the door of admission to the visible church of Christ, ought to be denied to none, who are either in the judgment of charity, or are really, such as are heirs of salvation. To the infants of professed believers, it cannot, surely, be lawfully denied, for they are visibly God’s in covenant. The most favourable sentiments of them are greatly encouraged by our Lord’s example, ^h “And they brought unto “him also infants, that he would touch them: but “when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But “Jesus called them unto him, and said, suffer little “children to come unto me, and forbid them not; “for of such is the kingdom of God.” Did Christ
take

^h Luke xviii. 15. 16.

take up infants in his arms; and, yet, would he have them excluded from his visible church? Would he have us to receive them in his name, and, yet, will he not acknowledge them himself? Does Christ account the reception of them as if it were a reception of himself? And will it not follow, that those who refuse to acknowledge them as visible members of the body of Christ, are, inadvertently, guilty of a rejection of Christ himself, and of the Father who sent him? Is the kingdom of heaven theirs? And shall the church on earth, Christ's lower kingdom, presume to shut them out?

But, not to dwell more on the reason of the thing, it is plain, that the Apostle Peter was of opinion, that a right to the blessings of the covenant of grace, founded a right to the seal of baptism; for, once and again, he argues from this supposition, as an uncontested principle. Thus, Acts ii. 38. 39.: "Be baptized," says he, "every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ,—for the promise is unto you, and to your children; and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Does he not plainly suppose, that all who are interested in the promise to which he refers, ought to receive baptism as its seal? Again, Acts x. 47.: "Can any man," he says, "forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" That is, would it not be absurd, that those who partake of the purifying influences of the Spirit of God, should be precluded from receiving baptism, in which these influences are represented and sealed? If all who are in covenant with God, and who receive the Spirit of God, ought to be baptized; then, it must be impossible

possible that baptism ought to be denied to infants in the church of Christ. It has been shewn, that they are visibly in the covenant of God; and, it is evident, from Luke i. 15. that some of them, even in their infant state, certainly receive the Spirit of promise. "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost," it is there said of John, "*even from his mother's womb.*"

It might, perhaps, be here replied, that there would be no good ground for objecting to the baptism of those infants, whom we could demonstrate to be internally in covenant with God, and actual partakers of regenerating grace. To this objection I answer, in one word, that it is quite sufficient, if infants are visibly in the covenant of God; and that it is in consequence of this circumstance, and not from any knowledge of the secrets of heaven, or of the hearts of men, that we can dispense baptism even to the adult persons who are admitted to receive it.

(2.) Another argument for infant-baptism may be taken from Col. ii. 11. 12. "In whom also," says the Apostle, that is, in Christ, "ye are circumcised" "with the circumcision made without hands, in" "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by" "the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in" "baptism; wherein, also, ye are risen with him," "through the faith of the operation of God, who" "hath raised him from the dead." Here the Apostle, to withdraw the Colossians from the rites of the ceremonial law, and, particularly, from circumcision, to which the Jews warmly urged them to adhere, observes, that they were "complete in" "Christ," all spiritual blessings being in him, and all ordinances, necessary to their happiness or comfort,

fort, being appointed by him : that in him they had the thing signified by circumcision, being sanctified in him, and so “ having put off the body of the sins “ of the flesh :” and that, though circumcision was completely abolished under the Gospel, they and their infant seed had baptism in its room, to represent and to seal to them the blessings of the covenant of grace. The Apostle’s argument would have been both incomplete and inconclusive, could the Jews have alledged, that, under the old dispensation, their infants had promises belonging to them, and a claim to circumcision as the seal of these promises ; but that now they were deprived of both, and had nothing equally valuable substituted in their room.

(3.) Can we then think, if infants had been deprived, by Christianity, of their Old Testament privileges, without any compensation, or any thing put in their place, that this would have occasioned no murmuring among the Jews, or would have afforded them no handle against the Gospel? They were too proud of their prerogatives, to part with them at so easy a rate. And, yet, where do we find them complaining that the privileges of their children were taken away by Christianity, or were less than they had been under the old dispensation? No evidence of this can be brought, either from the New Testament itself, or from any ancient writing which hath come down to us. And are we not then warranted to conclude that the doctrine and the practice of the primitive church, with regard to the baptism of the infants of believers, had taken away from the Jewish converts, and from their countrymen, every shadow of complaint or objection on this subject?

It may now be proper to consider some objections against this doctrine, which those who have urged them profess to derive from reason or from Scripture. And,

(1.) It is asked, with an air of triumph, for what purpose shall one be baptized, who neither knows what is done to him, nor is capable to give any consent to it? But let me inquire at those who put this question, if they are wiser than God? Had Isaac the use of reason at eight years of age? Or had he speech to express his consent to that which was done to him? Or had his descendants the use of either, at the age of eight days? And, if they had them not, must God be charged with weakness, or with unreasonableness, for applying to them the seal of his covenant? Certainly, God commands nothing in vain. And it ought to satisfy us, that the initiating ordinances, both of the Old and of the New Testament, have no dependence on the creature, but depend entirely on God's own free Spirit, who renders them effectual for the ends of their appointment. Infants are capable of these ordinances, because they are capable of receiving the blessings which are signified by them:—blessings which, under the Old Testament dispensation, were actually sealed to them in circumcision, and are sealed to them by baptism under the New. Is not this analogous to what we see done in the common affairs of this life every day? What is more usual, than that infants have charters containing their civil rights, granted and sealed to them, while, in the mean time, they are altogether incapable of knowing what is done for them? Shall we pronounce it impossible for God to make over and seal the blessings of his covenant, to one, who,

who, as yet, understands not the nature of the grant? In leases and covenants, the consent of the parent binds the child, though, at the time when that consent is given, he neither knows, nor is capable of knowing the nature of the transactions? Is this just or rational in civil affairs? And shall we deem it iniquitous or absurd in the case of baptism, where the parent claims nothing for the child, and promises nothing in his name, but what the child would be bound by interest and by duty to ratify, though the act of his parents had been null and void? Would any son complain of it as a hardship, that in his infancy, his parent had claimed for him a rich inheritance, or a beneficial office?

(2.) It has been further argued, “That the promise of God’s covenant belongs only to the elect; that, therefore, they alone have a right to its seal; and that none can be certain, in any case, that an infant offered to baptism is elected.”

I answer to this objection, that it is equally plain, on the other hand, that we cannot be certain with regard even to adult persons, that they are elected; and therefore, if the objection is good for any thing, it would go so far as to prove that they also should not be baptized: that is, it would lead us to infer, that the ordinance must be dispensed to none, till God shall be pleased to reveal to us, that they are certainly elected. We must, if we follow out the objection, condemn John the Baptist for baptizing the Sadducees and Pharisees, who were a generation of vipers, upon their external profession of repentance; and the Apostles of our Lord, for baptizing Simon Magus and others, who were really in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

quity. Besides, those who make the objection seem to have forgotten, that though circumcision, as well as baptism, was a seal of the righteousness of faith, yet all the male seed of Abraham without distinction, were commanded to be circumcised: facts which demonstrate, that seals may be dispensed to those who are only outwardly in the covenant of God. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, unless we could know what is certainly beyond our reach, and altogether unfit to be the subject of our inquiry; who are, and who are not elected.

(3.) Others have attempted to form an argument from Acts ii. 38. "Repent and be baptized;" from Acts viii. 12. "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women;" and from Acts viii. 37. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized." From these texts they conclude, that we must believe and repent, before we are baptized; and, therefore, that infants, being incapable of these exercises of the mind, must be incapable of receiving the ordinance of baptism.

But without going farther into this kind of argument, let me at present only ask, whether we can safely reason, from that which is required of persons come to full age, to that which is required of infants? "He that believeth not, shall be damnedⁱ." Are we from this assertion to conclude, that all who die in their infancy must eternally perish, because they are incapable of believing? Or, ought we to abandon infants to hunger and death,

ⁱ Mark xvi. 16.

death, because it is said, 2 Thess. iii. 10. "That they who will not work, should not eat?" Or should the Jews have delayed to circumcise their infants, till they had taught them the nature of the covenant of grace, because Abraham understood that covenant before he received its seal?

II. I proceed to the argument for infant-baptism, arising from my text; from which the chief objections urged against it have been drawn. The objections, some have thought to have derived their chief strength, from a wrong translation of the text; since it might be better rendered: "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them." And they observe, that infants are capable of being considered as disciples, since that designation is expressly given them, Acts xv. 10. I may add, that it is as easy to shew, how those who are incapable of learning may be disciples, as to shew how those who are incapable of working may be servants: and children are expressly stiled God's servants, Lev. xxv. 41. 42.

But though we were to drop this criticism, the objections to the doctrine drawn from this text may be easily solved. And, 1st, some have contended, that teaching being put first in the precept, we must be taught before we ought to be baptized. But those men must be strangely unacquainted with the stile of the Scriptures, who think, that that which is first named in any text must, in the order of time, precede that which is afterwards mentioned. Were this to be admitted, we might prove, that we ought to confess with the mouth before we believe with the heart; ¹ or, that John baptized his hearers be-

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¹ Rom. x. 4.

fore he preached the baptism of repentance^k; consequences which are, at first sight, absurd; and which the Anabaptist must reject by his own principles, though they naturally arise from the mode of interpretation to which I now refer.

There are others who argue, that as teaching and baptizing are things connected in the precept, they ought to be so in practice too; and therefore, that none should be baptized but those who are really capable of being taught. They observe, that the command about teaching, must, from the nature of the thing, be restricted to those who are capable of it; and that therefore the command to baptize must be restricted to them likewise; since, otherwise, the words *all nations* must, in the same sentence, be taken in two very different senses. When they are joined with teaching, they must relate only to the aged: and yet, when they are joined with baptism, the infants must be understood to be comprehended in them, as well as adult persons. When the words "*baptizing them*" are used, the relative can apply to those alone who were taught; otherwise (according to the persons who urge this objection) the Scriptures must use a language which is both incoherent and unintelligible. This is the strong-hold of those who reject the doctrine of infant-baptism. Let us however approach it, and try its strength.

Though we were to suppose, that this text relates only to the baptism of such as are taught, would it follow from thence, that there are no other texts of Scripture to warrant the baptism of children? Because the precepts of Christianity are, in some pas-

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^k Mark i. 4.

sages of the New Testament, particularly directed to bishops, to magistrates, and to masters of families; shall we therefore say, that the Holy Ghost intended by this to signify, that, in the instances alluded to, other men are permitted to live as they please? Can we not easily find better reasons for the special charges given to the men who are particularly addressed? And, in like manner, can we not assign other reasons for the joint mention of teaching and baptizing, than any intention to exclude from baptism those who are incapable of being immediately taught? Might it not proceed from this circumstance, that the instruction of the nations was in fact to precede the administration of baptism among them, as it must have been after the aged had been taught the doctrine of the covenant of grace, and had embraced it, that the seal thereof could be applied to them or to their seed? If the conjunction of two things in a precept were a sufficient proof, that they should never exist separately, would it not follow from Tit. ii. 4. 5. that no women should be taught to be sober and chaste, but those who have children to love, and husbands to obey? Nay, will it not follow from the very passage in debate, that ministers ought never to teach, but when they can baptize also; and therefore should never attempt to convert infidels to the Christian faith, when they are, from any circumstance, not in a capacity to baptize them? The authority of infant-baptism would suffer little, though the Baptists were able to prove, that in this text, the aged alone are commanded to be baptized. But, even this they are incapable of proving. It is not to be presumed that a wise prince would enact laws, or grant commissions,
which

which could not be executed: and it would be impossible to make disciples of all nations, or even of one nation, if infants, who are a great part of every nation, could not be admitted into the school of Christ. But, more particularly,

(1.) When things different in themselves are affirmed of collective bodies, some of which must be understood as restricted to the adult, because they alone are capable of them; it can never follow from thence, that the same restriction is to be applied to those things of which the infants and the aged are equally capable, because they happen to be united in the same sentence. Suppose a prince, set over several nations, to be engaged, by his coronation oath, to give good laws to all the nations under his government for regulating their conduct, and to afford them protection and defence against their enemies; would it follow, because the aged alone are capable of regulating their conduct by law, that therefore the benefit of protection was to be limited to them? And yet the Baptist, if he is consistent with himself, must explain the oath in this way; because otherwise, the word *nations* will have two very different meanings in the same sentence. It is obvious, that the prince would be bound to give all the different benefits to his subjects, which are specified in his oath, as far as they should be capable of receiving them; and therefore, that he could not justly deny them one, because their situations rendered them incapable of others. In like manner, should it be said, that the Mahometans, at a certain time seduced several Christian nations, and then satiated their cruelty, by killing, impoverishing, and destroying them; would it be reasonable to conclude,

clude, because the aged alone are capable of being seduced, that therefore the barbarities of the Mahometans could not or did not reach their children?

It must be plain, therefore, that though infants are not included in the precept to teach “all nations,” it cannot follow from thence, that the precept “to baptize,” does not extend to them; unless it can be shewn, contrary to what has been already proved, that that which disqualifies them from being taught, renders them equally incapable of being baptized. If the Baptists affirm this, they only beg the question at issue, instead of proving the doctrine which they profess to establish.

Let us view this argument in another light. A warrant to extend any thing to a collective body of men, is, according to every fair interpretation, a warrant for extending it to the individuals of whom the collective body consists; unless the author of the warrant shall have made a special restriction, or the nature of things shall oblige us to explain his warrant in a more limited sense. In the precept to teach and to baptize all nations, no limitations are expressed; and, though the natural incapacity of infants to be taught excludes them from the privilege expressed in the first part of the precept, they can never, for the same reason, be excluded from the privilege of baptism. The infants of the house of Abraham certainly received an initiating seal of the covenant of God, under the Old Testament dispensation; and it is impossible to devise a reason which should render the infants of the Christian church less capable of receiving the ordinance of baptism. The Apostles are appointed to baptize all nations, of which infants are a considerable part.

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And it is surely neither a simple nor a natural way of explaining the term *nations*, to exclude from its signification so considerable a number of the individuals of whom every nation is composed. When, notwithstanding the generality of the term, the Baptists require an express command for baptizing infants, they might as well require a special and separate command for the baptism of the old and of the young, of the men and of the women. It was not necessary that the command should have specified every description of individuals of whom nations are made up. The general term comprehends the whole, and must have been designed to comprehend them.

It is a mistake, moreover, to affirm, that infant-baptism can only be proved by means of consequences drawn from texts of Scripture. For, to demonstrate what the true extent of a precept is, is quite a different thing from any deduction of remote consequences which may be supposed to follow from it.

(2.) It is the property of all grants or charters conferring privileges, that if doubtful expressions are found in them, they ought always to be understood in the most favourable sense for the persons to whom the privileges are given. There are peculiar reasons against tacit restrictions, and against any restrictions which are not clearly contained in the grants; because the general expressions convey a valid right and title, and found an obligation on those who are entrusted with the means of conferring the privileges conveyed, not to withhold them in any case which has not been specially excepted, from those in whose favour the grants are conceived.

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When there is any evidence of an acquired right by a general grant, the assertors of a restriction are bound to prove it. But it is not incumbent on those who plead their interests in general grants, made to collective bodies, to prove particularly, that the benefit of the grants extends to this, or to that person. A general proof, that it belongs to the whole body, is perfectly sufficient to support the claim or ascertain the interest of any individual.

The Baptists admit that there is no need of particular warrants to baptize persons of the different denominations of which nations are made up; the men and the women, the high and the low, the rich and the poor; and allow besides, that as the command is general to baptize all nations, it would be unwarrantable to exclude from the privilege of baptism, for want of a particular direction, persons coming under any of those different descriptions.—It will not be easy, in a consistency with what is thus admitted, to shew why a special command should have been necessary to warrant the baptism of infants, or how, without any particular direction, they can be lawfully excluded from baptism, notwithstanding the general and unqualified terms, in which the commission to baptize is given to the Apostles.

Is it not a privilege to children, to have the seal of the covenant of God applied to them? Is the reflection on the happiness, which would have been theirs, if they had died in their infancy, no additional incitement in the service of God, as they advance in life? Does it afford them no peculiar plea for mercy, or encouragement to expect it? Is it no privilege to parents, to have their hopes strengthened

ed by the baptism of their children, while they are fervently pleading at the throne of grace, that God would fulfil the promise held up to their faith, “I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed?” And is it not an advantage to the church of Christ in general, to have frequently administered among them a sacred rite, which by God’s blessing has so happy a tendency to keep alive in men’s minds, due impressions of their natural depravity; of that precious blood which was shed to cleanse from the guilt of sin; and of those influences of the Spirit of God whereby we are washed from its pollution? Ought not these objects (represented in baptism) to be much in our thoughts? Are we not all too apt to forget them? And are not the sensible signs useful in a high degree, to strengthen our weak impressions of invisible things, and of spiritual truths? Has not the administration to infants of the initiating seal of the covenant of grace this peculiar advantage, that it tends to promote a due sense of the need which the young have as well as the old to be pardoned, and to be sanctified? A precept, therefore, instituting such an ordinance, must be construed as a grant of privileges; and ought to be explained in the same favourable sense in which every conveyance of privileges among men is interpreted.

To strengthen this reasoning, I might add, that the initiating seal of the covenant of grace is not only a privilege, but a privilege of which the infants of the members of the church of God were actually possessed under the Old Testament dispensation. When therefore there is no express revocation of this privilege, are we entitled to presume that it is revoked in a dispensation which is introduced to en-

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large the privileges of the church of God, and not to diminish them? If a prince should disannul the old charter of a certain society, and give them a more ample charter, and better security for the privileges which it contained, would it be reasonable to think, that the prince intended, though he had not said it expressly, that a part of that society was to be deprived of certain privileges, contained in both the charters, and once common to all the members of the society? Would a thing so unfavourable be presumed, when the intention was to enlarge the privileges conferred by the charter, merely because the names of all the members of the old society were not expressed in the new charter? Or, would it not rather be understood, that, whatever was made over to the society in general, might be claimed for each particular member, as soon as he was capable of receiving it?

(3.) In explaining words, due regard must always be had to the authorized practice and custom of the places and times in which the words have been spoken, as applied to things of the same or of a like kind. And therefore if a question arise about the extent of a new law, it is reasonable to consider the extent of a former law, enacted by the same authority, and relating to a thing of the same nature. Suppose a British missionary sent to teach and baptize certain Indian nations; if he were sent by the Baptists, the known doctrine and practice of the missionary would demonstrate, that his commission to baptize related to adult persons only. But if he were sent by those who hold the authority of infant-baptism, it would be equally plain, that he was authorised to dispense baptism to children as well as

to persons advanced in life; though, perhaps, his commission might not mention the infants in express words. When the Apostles were sent to teach and baptize all nations, it is evident that it was neither the doctrine nor the practice of the church to which they originally belonged, to exclude infants from the initiating seal of God's covenant. The Author of the law which they promulgated, had by a former statute, extended to infants the initiating seal which was at first appointed: and from the days of Abraham to the ascension of Christ, circumcision, the first initiating seal of the covenant of grace, was administered to children. When therefore a new initiating seal is substituted in place of the first, and the statute appointing it makes no intimation that infants are to be excluded, it is reasonable to infer, that the legislator intended that children should remain, as they were formerly, entitled to the blessings of the covenant, and to its initiating seal. A similar example will illustrate this. Though the first day is different from the seventh day of the week, the doctrines and precepts concerning the Sabbath, which originally related to the seventh day, are now justly applied to the first, which has succeeded in its room; as the general nature and design of both is precisely the same. The defenders of the morality of the Sabbath justly argue, that we are to distinguish between two different things, in the fourth commandment; viz. between the chief scope and substance of the precept, that there shall be a Sabbath in seven days; and the circumstance, that it shall be observed on the seventh day precisely. In like manner, though circumcision and baptism are different rites, yet as they agree in their general nature and object, as initiating seals of the co-

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venant of grace, it would be unreasonable, when the legislator has not intimated it, to infer from any circumstantial difference betwixt them, that those who were entitled to the first, are to be excluded from the latter.

It is not without ground that we assert, that baptism succeeds in the room of circumcision, as an initiating seal. Circumcision is expressly stiled a seal of the righteousness of faith ^l, which implies that it is a seal of the covenant of grace. Nay the first institution of it proves this, where it is not only annexed to the covenant, but is called the covenant ^m. It was also the initiating or first seal, by which those who received it were solemnly admitted as members of the church of God. All these circumstances belong to baptism in the Christian church, and to it only. The design of both these ordinances is the same; the same objections are applicable to both; and Christ intended, as appears from Col. ii. 11. 12., that the one should supply the place of the other. But it is equally plain from Scripture, that baptism not only answers the peculiar ends of circumcision, as a sign and a seal, but as the initiating seal also of the covenant of grace, the sign of solemn admission into the church of God; and hence, we are said to be baptized into one body ⁿ. It is the sign, not, as the other sacrament of the New Testament, of continued and repeated nourishment, but of our first *ingrafting*; and therefore a sign not to be used a second time, because the thing signified by it is not repeated. Those who maintain the opposite doctrine must acknowledge, that when circumcision was abolished, baptism took place; and that by baptism the adult are solemnly admitted into

^l Rom. iv. 11.^m Gen. xvii 10.ⁿ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

to the church of Christ, or recognized as its members: and these concessions will infer a great part of what I am here asserting.

(4.) In explaining a law, when any difficulty arises with regard to its interpretation, we ought to consider in what sense it was understood at the time when it was first enacted; especially by those who had best access to know the legislator's mind, and at the same time the most entire regard to his authority. Let us consider therefore, whether the practice of the Apostles, in executing their commission to baptize all nations, contradicts or confirms our interpretation of that commission. We often read, in the history of the primitive church, of *houses* or *families* being baptized by the Apostles. This circumstance would be of less importance, if we found only one or two families of whom this description is given. But the number of examples is considerable. In general, in every instance recorded of the baptism of *families*, without one exception, the narrative either speaks of the baptism of *whole* families, or it speaks of the baptism of families without restriction. It never mentions the baptism of one part of a family as distinguished from another part of the same family who were not baptized. Much less are we told in any instance, that one part of a family was baptized because it consisted of adult persons, while other members of the same family were left without baptism, because they were infants. It is never said, that *whole* houses were baptized, because every individual among them was an adult person: and yet this our opponents must affirm to be the reason, why the *whole* houses spoken of in Scripture were baptized; though they must also admit that it is a reason, of which the Scripture

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ture itself has not given us the most remote hint. They must say besides, not only that in many instances only one part of a family was baptized; but that there were as many examples of this kind in the primitive church as there were of Christian parents, who had infant children. Yet not one single instance is recorded, to prove the important change affirmed to have been made, by which infants were deprived of the initiating seal of the covenant of God; a privilege, to which, for so many ages before the promulgation of Christianity, they are allowed to have been entitled. In other cases, the examples recorded in Scripture are well calculated to suggest directions, suitable and subservient to the doctrines of Scripture; yet not one example given us of the baptism of families has directed us to distinguish betwixt infants and adult persons; but all of them are so narrated as to lead us to suppose, that neither the infants nor the adult were precluded from this privilege. If the Apostle's commission to baptize was indeed limited to adult persons, as the Baptists affirm, would it not follow, that the narratives of family baptisms given us in the New Testament, instead of being useful to direct the practice of later times, are calculated to mislead and to deceive us?

I add, moreover, that it is at least very improbable, that the *whole* families of Lydia, of the jailor at Philippi and others, were come to full age, and were baptized on account of their own conversion. For, had this been the case, the conversion of these whole families must have been admitted to have been a far more remarkable and unusual display of Divine grace, than the conversion of the father or mother of any family would have been. Their baptism

tism is recorded ; their faith, though it would have been so unusual a dispensation of the grace of God, is not so much as hinted. On the other hand, the histories sent down to us are such as might have been naturally expected, if the baptism of the infants is included, when *whole* families are said to be baptized, proceeding on the faith of the believing parents.

If we shall join together all these arguments, they will be found to confirm and strengthen one another. They must at least go far to convince us, that the doctrine of infant-baptism is neither the unfounded doctrine, which some men affirm it to be ; nor a doctrine which any specious declamations on the incapacity of infants to receive baptism, or on the *general* terms of the commission given to the Apostles, can warrant us in rejecting.

I conclude by repeating our Lord's address to the Apostles : " Suffer little children, *and forbid them not* " to come unto me ; for of such is the kingdom of " heaven."

SERMON XIII.

ON CHRIST BEARING WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. 37.

TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE
WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH.

OUR Lord had disclaimed in the preceding verse, the design of erecting a temporal monarchy. In our text, he describes the true nature of his kingdom, and the manner of erecting it. He was to found it, not by resisting, but by submitting to violence; not by the blood of his enemies, but by his own blood. “Pilate said unto him, Art thou a king
“then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a
“king.” I acknowledge, that I am a king; but a king, of whom Cæsar need not be jealous; as my claims do not in the least interfere with his. I mean not by force of arms to dethrone the tyrants of the earth, and to rescue nations from outward slavery. My undertaking, in which, difficult as it is, I am sure to succeed, is infinitely more noble and important; it is nothing less than that, by the energy of Divine truth, I may destroy the empire of sin and Satan. “To this end was I born, and for this

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“cause came I into the world, that I should bear “witness unto the truth.” I came into the world to bear witness to the truth, not merely by preaching it, and attesting by my sufferings my sincerity in what I preached; but by giving the world in the sufferings to which I submit, a demonstration of Divine truth, which hath never before been given to the world. “Every one, that is of the truth, “heareth my voice;” that is, whosoever truly understands and firmly believes my testimony, feels its constraining force, and becomes my willing subject.

Our text therefore unfolds the end of the Son of God’s coming into the world, and the character of his subjects. It is only to the first of these points, that I would at this time direct your meditations. And in discoursing on it I shall first point out what the truth is, to which Christ, by his sufferings, bare witness. And then I shall shew, why *bearing witness to the truth* is represented as the end of the birth and mission of Jesus.

I. What is the truth, for bearing witness to which Jesus was born and came into the world? We need not wander far in quest of this. It is that truth, which was worthy of the blood of the Son of God; and which, when discerned by an enlightened understanding, restores God to the throne of the heart, and restores the heart to the image of God. It relates to the name or the character of God, as the Perfection of beauty, and as the Sovereign of the universe.

The wide extended universe was first formed, and is still preserved, to display to rational beings the glory

glory of its Author. And surely, no meaner end was designed in that work of redemption, which is in truth, the chief of the works of God. With a word, God spake the universe into existence, that his invisible things, even his eternal power and Godhead might be seen by the things which he hath made. And can we think, that he sends his only begotten and well beloved Son, to groan, and bleed, and die, without an aim sufficient to vindicate his wisdom in that amazing event? Remarkable are the words of Jesus, John xvii. 25. 26. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love, whereby thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." The world hath not known thee as a God of inflexible justice; and at the same time as the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. This thy name I have already declared to my disciples, by my doctrines and by my spirit; and now I am about to declare it, in the most convincing and affecting manner, by my blood. From this truth, as the fountain, every holy principle and operation flows. Hence our Lord tells his disciples in that same interesting prayer, ver. 3. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And again, ver. 19. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

But this will best appear by surveying some particular truths, comprehended in that character of God, which Jesus came into the world to display.

(1.) The sufferings of Christ were the most impressive proof which could be given of God's eternal justice. The punishment of sin flows from the essential and unchangeable perfections of God's nature, not from the determinations of mere arbitrary will. A disposition to punish, where, without injustice or imprudence, punishment might have been forborn, is deemed among men, an indication of a malicious, ill-natured spirit. Far be it from us to ascribe any thing like this to Him whose work is perfect. No, my brethren, he bears an infinite displeasure against sin; and it becomes him to testify that displeasure. He always acts in a way becoming himself; and his wrath, in a variety of ways and forms, hath been revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. The earth covered with briars and thorns; the irrational creation made subject to vanity; men born to misery, as the sparks fly upwards; Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire from heaven, as an example to them who should afterwards live ungodly; are awful monuments of God's displeasure against sin. Yet all these lose their terror, when compared with that more dreadful vengeance, which awaits impenitent transgressors beyond the grave. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and have no rest, day or night." But were hell naked before us, and destruction without a covering, we could not behold even there, so bright a display of God's justice, as in the sufferings of Christ. So strict and inflexible was it, that to deliver us from the curse of the law, He, who was
worthy

worthy of every blessing, must be made a curse. It was no light affliction, no easy trial, to which he submitted, when God laid on him the iniquities of us all. To expiate our guilt, He who is represented as the power and wisdom of God, not only prays and labours, but weeps and groans, sweats and trembles, bleeds and dies. His body is wounded and bruised. His soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And when performing the most signal act of obedience, the Protector of innocence and the Rewarder of virtue so far withdraws from him both the sense of comfort and of joy, that he cries out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

When we see a slave beaten, we conclude, that a fault has been committed, though perhaps of no great demerit. But severe correction, inflicted by a tender-hearted father on his only son, argues some exceedingly heinous provocation. Yet, lo ! He, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men ; He, who delights in the prosperity, not in the torture and anguish of his servants, spares not his only Son ; the Son, who never offended him ; the Son, who ever did the things which pleased him. The Saviour was chargeable only with imputed guilt. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin. Tell me, could the Almighty manifest more fully, his infinite indignation against moral evil, and the utter impossibility of his suffering it to escape unpunished ? If the blood of bulls and of goats could have cleansed men from spiritual defilement ; or if the debt of sin, consistently with the Divine honour, could have been compounded for, at some cheaper and easier rate ; God would not have demanded, in payment for it,
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the blood of his well-beloved Son. Yet he did demand it; and gave not over smiting the Shepherd, till justice said, it is enough. The question is natural, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus, and what meaneth the heat of this great anger? May we not say, as David said to Eliab, Is there not a cause? It became God to testify to the whole intelligent creation, that punishment is the necessary consequence of transgression; and that tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish, could not be averted from those who have broken the law of God, unless the Son of God himself had become the propitiation for their sins.

(2.) The sufferings of our Lord Jesus bear the strongest testimony to the love and mercy of God. Reason, if duly improved, might have taught us that God is infinitely displeased at sin; and that it became him to testify that displeasure. But no principles of reason demonstrate, that God must be kind to rebels against his government; or though they deserve the severest tokens of his wrath, that he would be unjust and cruel, should he leave them to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own devices. If God is not bound by the perfections of his own nature to shew mercy, reason cannot assure us that he will shew it; or that fallen man, rather than apostate angels, should be thus favoured. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or, who hath been his counsellor^a? For what man knoweth the things of a man,” *his secret counsels and designs*, “save the spirit of a man, which is in him? Even so, the things of God,” *the free determinations of the Divine will*, “knoweth no man, but the Spirit of

“ of

^a Rom. xi. 34.

“ of God ^b.” In Jesus alone, “ the love and kindness
 “ of God our Saviour toward man appeared ^c.”
 Mercy is a most glorious and amiable perfection of
 the Divine nature, without the knowledge of which,
 fallen man must sit in darkness and in the region and
 shadow of death. Well then does He, who reveals
 this, merit the title of the true light. Now, “ grace
 “ and truth came by Jesus Christ”—not only par-
 doning mercy, but the true knowledge of it. “ No
 “ man hath seen God at any time.” That love and
 mercy, in the exercise of which, God peculiarly de-
 lights, unassisted reason could not discern. “ The
 “ only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the
 “ Father, he hath declared him ^d.” Jehovah, the
 Son, who of old descended in the cloud, and pro-
 claimed the name of Jehovah the Father, hath in
 the fulness of time proclaimed by his blood, as well
 as by his doctrine, “ The LORD, the LORD GOD
 “ merciful and gracious ^e.” When God, instead of
 sparing, for our sakes delivers to the most exquisite
 sufferings, a person infinitely dear to him, no far-
 ther proof can be required, that with him he is
 willing freely to give us all things. In the gift of
 such a ransom for men, the dimmest eye may read
 the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of
 that love, *which passeth all knowledge*. For “ in
 “ this,” above every thing else, “ was manifested
 “ the love of God; because he sent his only begotten
 “ Son into the world, that we might live through
 “ him ^f.” Think on the inexpressible blessings con-
 tained in redemption. Think on the natural unwor-
 thiness of the men who are redeemed. And, above
 all,

^b 1 Cor. ii. 11.^c Tit. iii. 4.^d John i. 17. 18.^e Exod. xxxiv. 5. 6.^f 1 John iv. 9.

all, contemplate the sufferings of the Son of God, which paved the way for the communication of such inestimable blessings to them.

(3.) The purposes for which the Son of God was born and came into the world, throw a lustre and a glory on the patience and long-suffering of God. Daily experience indeed teacheth us, that sentence is not speedily executed against an evil deed. God causeth his sun to shine on the evil and the good; and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. Yet unassisted reason cannot teach the foundation of this forbearance, or reconcile it with the justice of God; or unfold the gracious purposes for which it is exercised. The parable of the barren fig-tree, spared for a season at the request of the vine-dressers, to try if in consequence of digging about it and dunging it it would bear fruit, informs us, that for the common bounties of Providence, and the enjoyment of the means of grace, we are indebted to the intercession of Christ; and consequently to that atonement, on which his intercession is founded. Little do men reflect, while they are abusing these gifts, that what they thus abuse was the purchase of Christ's precious blood. In him all the promises of God are yea, and amen. For summer and winter; for seed-time and harvest; for bread that strengtheneth; and for wine that maketh glad the heart; for oil that causeth the face to shine; for great deliverance wrought for nations, or for their beloved princes; and for every thing else comfortable to man; man is indebted, not to the sacrifice of Noah, but to the more glorious sacrifice, which that was designed to typify. Through this, God is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that
all

all should come to repentance. Despise not, O sinner, the riches of forbearance, which cost the Son of God such bitter sorrows. Remember that, if this amazing goodness leads thee not to repentance, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

(4.) Jesus was born and came into the world, that he might bear witness to the wisdom of God, and display it with peculiar advantage. Christ crucified is "the wisdom of God in a mystery," which none of the princes of this world knew: unfathomable wisdom, which extracts the greatest good from the greatest evil, and which cures the disease by the death of the physician. Angels themselves could not have known this manifold wisdom of God, unless they had been permitted to contemplate his dispensations to the church on earth. They stoop down, and look with earnestness into these things. All the works of God proclaim their author "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Yet there is a depth in the riches of his wisdom and knowledge, which is only revealed by the incarnation, the life, and the death of his Son. Wisdom formed every thing at first beautiful, excellent, glorious, and well adapted to answer the end of its creation. But after sin hath defaced the beauty, and disturbed the harmony of this lower world, Divine Wisdom shines forth so conspicuously in its renovation, that God shall be glorified in the fallen race, and fallen men shall become more safe and happy than they were before sin or death entered into the world. The love and mercy of God are more illustriously manifested, than if sin had been pardoned without

any satisfaction : and yet his justice is more awfully displayed, than if Adam's guilty and degenerate offspring had been doomed to everlasting punishment. As the result of all this, believers are more firmly established in the favour of God, and are entitled to "a more exceeding weight of glory," than our first parents were in a state of innocence. Reason might tell us how God could glorify his goodness, by blessing the righteous ; or his justice, by punishing the wicked ; but how a multitude of sinners could be happy, and yet the rights of justice secured ; the truth of God's threatenings vindicated, and the authority of his law and government maintained ; the reason of man or of angels could not tell. In the sufferings of Christ alone, we see a plan worthy of Infinite Wisdom, in which God appears at once a just God and a Saviour ; while sin is punished, and yet sinners are saved ; justice is satisfied, and yet the offender is forgiven. Who would not tremble to violate a precept, the breach of which could not be expiated but by the blood of the Son of God ?

Suffer me to add, that the death of Christ bears witness to the great and glorious ends for which a wise Providence may be supposed to have permitted the introduction of moral evil. Sin, which in its own nature tends to dishonour God and ruin the sinner, by the death of Christ proves an occasion of displaying the glory of Divine perfections, which could not have been manifested, at least so brightly, had not sin been permitted : and thus the happiness of the innocent, and of the recovered part of the creation, in contemplating the Divine glory, is greatly increased ; and the quantity of enjoyment in the universe

universe may be greater than if sin and sorrow had been always unknown.

(5.) The purposes for which Christ was born and came into the world, bear witness that God is the judge of the whole earth, by whose sentence the final state of its rational inhabitants must be determined, in endless happiness or in endless suffering. In this sense as well as in others, life and immortality were brought to light by the Son of God. He, who breathed into men their rational spirits, and therefore who could best estimate their worth, valued them so highly as to suffer the punishment of sin for their sakes, and in their room. If there were not a world beyond the grave, in which wickedness was to be punished and virtue rewarded, Jesus would not have died. Had there been no wrath to come, or had that wrath been tolerable, he would not, to secure their redemption from it, have endured such dreadful sufferings as those to which he submitted. And on the other hand, the Father, who so loved men as to give his Son a ransom for them, certainly loved them sufficiently to bestow on them eternal life.

(6.) The end for which Jesus was born and came into the world, bears witness to the free, sovereign, and unmerited grace of God. I mean not by mentioning sovereignty to say, that God determines without a wise reason; far less that he can doom to misery where there is no guilt. I only mean, that where an offence has been committed, God may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and leave whom he will to perish in their impenitence and hardness of heart. A claim upon mercy carries a contradiction in its bosom: for to deny us that to which we have a righteous claim, would be injustice;

and therefore to bestow it is no favour. Men were partners with apostate angels in rebellion ; yet the Son of God, who took not on him the nature of angels, took on him the seed of Abraham. What child of pride dares to pretend that he has merited this distinction ? Jesus' coming to the world to die for men, was a gift of heaven, an exertion of Divine love, which cannot be exceeded, and cannot be equalled. If this was not too high a reward of human merit, surely no inferior blessing would have been so : consequently on this supposition, the pardon of sin, the renewing influences of the Spirit, and a right to eternal life, might have been conferred as a testimony of God's approbation of men's virtuous dispositions and endeavours, contrary to the whole tenor of the Gospel. " If righteousness come by the law ;" if man's salvation is founded on his obedience to it however imperfect ; " Christ is dead in vain ^g ;" dead in vain, in order to do that for man which man was capable to have done for himself. Had not the law been weak through the " flesh ^h," unable either to justify or sanctify the morally depraved, Jesus had no occasion by becoming a sin-offering, and fulfilling the righteousness of the law in their stead, to have purchased for them either pardon or sanctification. " When we were yet without strength," either to help ourselves, or to merit Divine help, " in due " time, Christ died for the ungodly ⁱ."

II. I shall now briefly consider, why *bearing witness to the truth* is represented as the end of the birth and mission of our Lord. Is not the sentiment of the Socinians justly deemed a dangerous error, that

Jesus

^g Gal. ii. 21.

^h Rom. viii. 3. 4.

ⁱ Rom. v. 6.

Jesus suffered only to set before us a pattern of obedience and submission, and to seal the truth of his doctrine? Undoubtedly it is. It places Jesus on a level with the Prophets and Apostles, and with thousands of men besides, who counted not their lives dear to them, when the preservation of life, and the steadfast profession of their faith became incompatible. But it is no heresy to say, that the Son of God was born, and lived and died, to bear witness to truths of an infinite value, in a way peculiar to himself; and by means, by which a person of infinite dignity alone could bear witness to them. It might easily be shewn, that the views given in other passages of the sacred Scriptures, of the ground and design of the incarnation and sufferings of Jesus, perfectly coincide with the idea in my text. In some scriptures, the glory of God is represented as the great end for which Jesus came into the world, and lived and died. Thus, John xii. 27. 28. "Now is my soul
"troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me
"from this hour: but for this cause came I unto
"this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came
"there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glo-
"rified it, and will glorify it again." John xvii. 4.
"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished
"the work which thou gavest me to do." In other scriptures, Jesus is represented as come into the world and suffering for our sins, that he might reconcile us to God, save us from the wrath to come, redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The result of all is this: "God hath set forth his Son to
"be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to de-
"clare his righteousness for the remission of sins;
"that

“ that he might be just, and the justifier of him
“ who believeth in Jesus ^j.” Thus the glory of Jesus, and of the Father who sent him, is great in the salvation of sinners. Spotless purity and tremendous justice appear perfectly consistent with the design of making known the riches of God’s glory by the vessels of mercy. “ Mercy and truth are met
“ together : righteousness and peace have kissed
“ each other. Truth springs out of the earth,” and is displayed there in all her lustre ; “ and righteousness,” or justice, now become friendly to men,
“ looks down from heaven ^k.”

Besides, this manifestation of God’s perfections which renders it honourable for him to impart blessings to sinners, is also the mean by which his Spirit restores them to the image of their Maker. Christ “ lifted up from the earth,” crucified that God might be glorified in man’s salvation, “ draws all
“ men to him.” Every motive of duty, interest, or gratitude, which can work on the human breast, derives a new and unknown force from the peculiar manner in which the Son of God hath born witness to the character of the Father. He, though a son, was obedient even to death : shall we disobey ? We were redeemed with his precious blood : shall we not, when we think on the necessary price of our redemption, pass the time of our sojourning here in in fear ? Judgment was executed on the Son of God : what then shall be the end of them who live ungodly ? Shall we not love the God who hath given us this highest token of love with all the heart, and serve him with all the strength ? Men will never be holy without spiritual discoveries of God’s supreme authority,

^j Rom. iii. 25. 26.

^k Psal. lxxxv. 10. 11.

authority, to which it becomes every creature to submit ; of his tremendous justice and of his incomprehensible love, as all these shine in the face of Jesus. When they have such views of God, by beholding his glory they will be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. It was worthy of the Son of God to bear witness by his blood to truth, whereby the Father was thus glorified, and his rebellious subjects recovered from their apostate and fallen state.

If any thing can attract and captivate the heart, and render subjection and obedience agreeable ; it is preventing grace, forgiveness of heinous provocations, and favours freely bestowed on the unworthy. Precepts and penal sanctions may alarm us ; but the love of God in bestowing his chief and unspeakable gift, raises within us the most tender emotions, and animates us to do and to suffer what would otherwise have been impossible. He labours without spirit, who labours for a haughty lord, or for a merciless creditor. But he whose debts are generously discharged, and who knows that his frugality and industry will give joy to his benefactor, and profit himself and his family, finds a pleasure even in painful exertions and restraints. He who knows what exquisite agonies were endured by his best and dearest friend, for expiating his guilt, can no longer sport with sin, or disregard holiness and virtue. No man who believes the testimony Jesus hath given of the Divine character can remain a hypocrite, a mere nominal Christian, an enemy to God in his heart, or by wicked works ; or can deliberately and habitually neglect the duties either of religion or of human

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man life, which the law of God binds on his conscience.

III. A few inferences shall conclude this discourse.

(1.) What hath been said, points out a sense in which Jesus, as distinguished from the most eminent of his servants, is termed, John i. 9. "The true light;" and John ix. 5. "The light of the world." If he was a teacher sent from God, so were his disciples also; some of whom were honoured to reveal truths which he did not see it fit to teach during his personal ministry. Hence he tells his Apostles, John xvi. 12. 13. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." His designation as "the Light, and the true Light of the world," has therefore been justly considered, as farther importing, that he alone, by the operations of his spirit, teaches inwardly and effectually; and opens men's understandings, that they may understand the Scriptures. Of this fact the beloved disciple speaks, 1 John v. 20. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding to know him that is true." And again, 1 John ii. 20. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Nevertheless it seems evident to me, from John ix. 4. 5. that those titles are given to Christ, with a special reference besides, to his working the works appointed him by the Father, while he was in this lower world. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. So long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

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Though the immediate purpose of these words was to defend our Lord's giving sight on the Sabbath to one born blind; they also suggest, that by what Jesus had done and suffered, and was farther to do and suffer by the commandment of the Father, truths were revealed and confirmed, which otherwise could not have been known at all; or at least which could not have been made known so fully by other means. Something like this seems also foretold, Isa. xxx. 26. "Moreover the light of the moon shall
" be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun
" shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in
" the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his
" people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." It is the excellence and the design of the sun and moon, with regard to the earth, that they render objects visible, and shew men the way in which they may safely walk. Now, by the foundation which the obedience and sufferings of Christ have laid for healing the diseases, and repairing the disorders which sin hath introduced into human nature, a testimony is given to the most important spiritual truths, sevenfold clearer, more decisive, and more productive of holy dispositions, and of wise and virtuous conduct, than any representation of them which mankind had ever before received.

(2.) How much is it our duty and our interest to believe and attend to truths attested and illustrated by so glorious a person, and in a manner so extraordinary? Harken not, thoughtless and presumptuous sinner, to the serpent whispering, "Thou shalt not
" surely die," for the sword of Divine Justice awaked against God's shepherd, and the man who was his fellow. If these things were done in the green tree,

what shall be done in the dry? Despair not, awakened soul, of any act of mercy, however great; for through the tender mercies of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us; yea, the Son of God hath visited, in order to die for us. In circumstances of the utmost perplexity and distress, let no man say, my relief is impossible, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God. Set not bounds to Infinite Wisdom. There is no searching out of that understanding, which by one mean could secure ends seemingly the most opposite; which could glorify mercy in punishing sin, and glorify justice in pardoning the sinner. Learn in Christ to know the name of God; and to see in that name all imaginable reason for fearing him, for loving him, and for trusting in him.—Fix your attention on the dignity of His character, who was born and came into the world to bear witness to these truths. He was the witness who was in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Ye regard the testimony of a wise and good man. Surely if ye receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater. The God who cannot lie must needs be a faithful and true witness. Treat him not then, by calling in question his testimony, as one capable of deceiving or of being deceived. Zacharias was smitten with dumbness for not believing the words of an angel. But a more dreadful doom awaits those who reject his testimony whom all the angels of God adore; who reject the testimony, not of his doctrine only, but of his death.—Consider farther, that the testimony given to the truths to which our Lord bare witness, was not an occasional incident in his life. No, it was a grand
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and leading end of whatsoever he did, and of all that he suffered. For this cause the Lord of hosts and the King of glory descended from heaven to earth, endured the contradiction of sinners, the buffetings of Satan, and the hidings of his Father's face. These truths he must have accounted transcendentally excellent and important, for confirming which he stooped so low, and drank a cup so exquisitely bitter. Let not that be seldom in your eye which was continually in his. Count it not a weariness to meditate on truths day and night, which employed the thoughts and directed the labours of the Son of God; and which at length he sealed with his precious blood. Esteem what he esteemed, whose judgment was always according to truth.—Set your hearts, my brethren, to that which the Son of God hath testified; it is not a vain thing so to do, for it is your life. That testimony which brought our Lord to the dust of death, when received with faith and love, becomes the seed of a spiritual and heavenly life. It is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. Dreadful is their infatuation who rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow, to acquaint themselves with the vices and follies of men; or at best to acquire knowledge, the honour and usefulness of which vanish at their death: while they despise the study of truths, which the most glorious Person the world ever saw, the Maker and Preserver of the world, lived and died to teach. As the Jews of old refused the waters of Shiloah, which ran softly, so do these despise those waters of divine instruction which the Rock of ages

was smitten to send forth. But whatever others do, pant ye for these salutary streams as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. If ye drink of them, they shall be in you as a well of living water springing up into everlasting life; and ye shall be as trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in its season, your leaf not withering, and whatsoever ye do prospering.

(3.) Aspire after the honour of bearing witness in your humble sphere to the name and character of God, as declared by the incarnation, the obedience, and the sufferings of his Son. We have a remarkable passage in Isa. xliii. 10. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen;" and again, ver. 12. "Ye are my witnesses that I am God." Let not us who preach the Gospel be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Let us receive and publish it with the zeal and ardour which it demands from us. Though we come not to you in excellency of speech or of wisdom, we may hope for success, if we declare to you the testimony of God: even this, that through the propitiation of Jesus Christ, God appears at once just and merciful in justifying them who believe. Ye who have believed unto righteousness, make confession with the mouth unto salvation. Declare your sense of the important purposes for which the Lord of life was crucified, by devoutly commemorating them at his table¹. Be valiant for the truth upon the earth. When truth falls in the street, resolve to fall with it rather than to renounce it. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering. Contend earnestly

¹ This sermon was preached at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper.

ly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach. Perhaps many may plead that their talents are too mean for contending with the despisers of Gospel truth. This, however, were it true, need not certainly hinder you from bearing witness to its Divine power and influence, by a holy and a circum-spect conversation. Adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; holding forth the word of life; shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

To conclude, the LORD hath said, “Them who honour me I will honour; and they who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” And He whom God hath given for a witness to the people testifies, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

SERMON

SERMON XIV.



ON FIDELITY IN PERSONAL DUTIES.



HEBREWS iii. 2.

WHO WAS FAITHFUL TO HIM WHO APPOINTED HIM, AS ALSO MOSES
WAS FAITHFUL IN ALL HIS HOUSE.

I HAVE had other opportunities of illustrating from these words, the work to which our Lord was appointed, and his fidelity to the Father who appointed him, in discharging the obligations which were laid on him, in their full extent. I am at present to take a different view of this text. I am to illustrate, what is so strikingly exemplified in the character of our Lord, the fidelity which we owe to God in discharging to the utmost extent of our capacities, the duties of the different callings and conditions of this life, to which we are appointed by his wise and good providence.

The general prosperity of human life, and the peace and comfort of individuals greatly depend on the diligence, the cheerfulness, and the spirit with which our personal duties are fulfilled. Few men duly consider the patience, the self-denial, or the steady attention to the will of God, which these
duties

duties require. The consciences of some men are perplexed by overstrained or exaggerated ideas of fidelity, while a greater number think on the subject too lightly, and equally neglect what they owe to God, to their neighbours, and to themselves. A serious and impartial representation may, through the blessing of God, be to all of us "*a word in season.*"

By callings or conditions, I mean not only offices and employments, but every opportunity and advantage for being useful in the place assigned us by the will of God, resulting either from our peculiar talents, or situations, or personal connections in this life. You may not be bound by human authority, or by your own voluntary engagements to any fixed or prescribed services to other men: yet the place which you occupy in this world must oblige you to exert yourselves with some correspondent activity. A variety of circumstances point out the secular business which ought to engage your chief attention; and the line in which you ought chiefly to contribute to the public welfare; while ye are bound to do that within your own sphere which your hands find to do, with all your might, so as to have the approbation of God to your fidelity, and the testimony of a good conscience. Every man ought, in one way or another, by the labour of his head, or of his hands, to employ his abilities for purposes profitable to himself, to his family, or to human society. God permits no man to live idle, useless, or inactive. The sphere of men's activity differs according to their rank, their genius, their necessities, and their occasions of exertion.

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I shall mention some particulars included in our fidelity to Him who hath appointed us our different callings, or our various departments of duty and usefulness in this life.

I. I mention as the First, an habitual and practical remembrance that God *hath* appointed us our different conditions, and that a proper discharge of the duties resulting from them, from a regard to his authority, is indeed service due, and service done to God.

In whatever office or employment, civil, ecclesiastical, or military, you are placed by the course of Providence, you serve God as effectually and as directly, by performing, in obedience to his will, the peculiar duties of the station assigned you, as you could have done by bearing your part in the most animated exercises of devotion. Decline not therefore the appointments of heaven. The vine and the fig-tree personified in Jotham's parable, contracted guilt, by declining from the love of ease, and by an improper regard to their private feelings, that authority which, when they declined it, was offered to, and abused by the bramble^a. God hath given men a variety of gifts and talents for their personal usefulness; and when they refuse the legitimate opportunities of employing them for his glory and the common good, they must be answerable to him for the consequences. "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin^b." Even slaves, in doing the duties of their inferior and painful stations, serve the Lord Christ^c. Christianity thus brings religion home to the most minute departments

^a Judges ix. 7. 14.

^b James iv. 17.

^c Col. iii. 22. 24.

partments of human life, to the house and to the field, to the shop and to the farm; and intimately unites earth to heaven. The toils to which our ordinary business subjects us, when endured from the love and the fear of God, not from avarice or ambition, become truly and substantially acts of religion. Indeed industry, when it is prompted by selfish or mercenary motives alone, has no more real virtue in it, than there is virtue in eating or drinking in order to satisfy the natural appetites of hunger and thirst. Men who are industrious from these motives have their reward. They often obtain the wealth or honour for which they have diligently laboured, and they can reasonably expect no more. But when Christians maintain the diligence and activity which their stations require, from a sense of duty, from gratitude to God, and benevolence to their fellow-men, God accounts them as good stewards of his manifold grace^d; he honours them with his approbation, and bountifully rewards as done to himself, that which was done from the sense of his authority, and done in the post which he had assigned them. They are workers together with God, and the instruments of diffusing his benefits among men. The care of the parent to educate his children, the endeavours of the learned to acquire and communicate to the world useful knowledge, the toil of the daily labourer, and the fatigue of the industrious mechanic, instigated and cherished by the spirit and principles of the Gospel, are all acceptable sacrifices to God; which Christians, even when placed in the meanest stations, are as a holy priesthood to present to him. And if it is honourable to serve

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^d 1 Pet. iv. 10.

an earthly prince with zeal and ardour, how much greater must be the dignity of those who minister to him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords?

II. Personal fidelity includes honest and assiduous endeavours to understand the different duties of our several callings or conditions, and to acquire the talents necessary to perform them well.

An ignorance of that which you owe to the post in society allotted you by the Governor of the universe, and an habitual carelessness with regard to the acquisition of the accomplishments necessary for discharging its peculiar obligations with advantage, must be fatal to every idea of fidelity. To do any justice to our personal duties, there must be supposed a knowledge of that in which our faithfulness should appear. Parents cannot be faithful in educating their children, who consider not the rules of a prudent, moral, and religious education; and who allow themselves deliberately to remain unacquainted with the manner of conducting this difficult task. A stranger to the duties of family government cannot be supposed to perform them well. And those men can never make full proof of their ministry, whether civil or sacred, who know not that which, by undertaking it, they have become solemnly bound to perform. No man can possibly succeed in attaining the ends of his calling, who is ignorant of that which it requires of him: and every man, next to the salvation of his soul, is bound to direct his chief attention, his chief thoughts, and his chief diligence, to the purposes of that calling in which he is, or in which he hopes to be engaged. Highly therefore doth it concern the youth to adorn their understandings with useful
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and professional knowledge, and to use their utmost industry in acquiring the habits requisite for their intended stations in the world. On the improvement of their early years, their usefulness in advanced life in a great measure depends. Experience has sufficiently demonstrated, that those who have spent their youth in idleness or dissipation, are seldom or ever qualified to discharge with honour the duties of their peculiar offices or relations. When the harvest comes, it is too late to sow; and when the spring of life is gone, and that season succeeds in which the fruits of diligence are expected, the best opportunity for acquiring the knowledge, and for forming the habits necessary for real and active usefulness, is gone never to return. In the youths who are training for business, or for the learned professions, an ambition to possess the talents, not which may make them admired, but which may prepare them for doing essential service in the world, is no culpable ambition.

That solicitude to excel, which flows not from the inordinate thirst of praise, but from a desire of advancing the glory of God, and the good of mankind, is both virtuous and Christian. Covet therefore, my young hearers, covet earnestly the best gifts. Let eminence in your respective professions excite your warmest wishes, and most unwearied endeavours; eminence I mean in the qualifications which are substantially useful, not in the shewy and splendid accomplishments which, though often of less intrinsic importance, are not seldom found to gain the greatest applause. If, for example, you are designed for the ministry of the Gospel, your influence on others, and your success in promoting their happiness,

ness, must, under God, depend on the extent of your knowledge, and on the degree of your prudence and facility in explaining and enforcing your opinions. To acquire and to cultivate these talents is therefore an important duty. Though eloquence is not the best gift, without it better gifts are too often disregarded and unprofitable.

But I must observe that a knowledge of the duties of a calling, and even the best talents for discharging them, are not sufficient. Personal fidelity chiefly consists in the diligence, animated by religious motives, which produces the activity which our separate duties require; and therefore I remark,

III. That men discover their fidelity, when they make conscience of the more difficult and burdensome, as well as of the more easy duties of their particular callings.

Every relation, connection, office, and business, in this life, if it has something agreeable, hath also something unpleasant attached to it. No man's calling is without its peculiar burdens, its difficulties, and hazards. The difference too of education, of natural temper, of talents, and of personal habits, has so much influence on us, that what to one man is easy, to another is extremely hard or difficult. After allowing all this, it must be admitted also, that he is not faithful who confines himself to those labours of his profession which he can perform with facility, or without much trouble; while he neglects those which demand personal labour, or considerable exertion and self-denial. When we clearly see that which God and conscience, his deputy within us, require of us, and yet deliberately allow

allow hardships or difficulties to turn us aside from the path of duty, the heart, if it is not blind and unfeeling, must condemn us ;—much more He, who is greater than the heart, and who knoweth all things. No human tribunal sustains, in excuse for neglecting our duty, the fatigues, the hazards, or the unpleasant circumstances which attend it. Princes justly expect that men, who are honoured with their commission, shall strictly follow their instructions, even though they should require from them the sacrifice not only of their ease, but even of their lives. No man is indeed bound to perform that which is beyond his power, though harsh and cruel masters may sometimes demand this ; and because it is not done, may have the injustice to condemn a man as an unfaithful servant. But he who is conscious that he exerts himself according to his best ability, and that he doth not presumptuously neglect what he knows to be his duty, because it is toilsome, or because it is hazardous, hath the testimony of his own mind that his conduct is approved by a higher Judge than men ; by “ Him who knows and who tries the heart, and who will render to every man according as his works have been.”

IV. Men shew their fidelity in their personal duties, when they do not neglect, for the sake of pleasures, their proper business or employments.

Amusements and relaxations wisely chosen, and prudently and moderately enjoyed, I readily acknowledge, are not only innocent in themselves, but are the natural and salutary means of recruiting and enlivening our exhausted spirits. Some men's personal or professional duties expose them to such peculiar

peculiar hardships and fatigue, that they would sink under the burden of them, and become incapable of the continued exertions which they require, if they had not the advantage of regular and successive relaxations. Their fidelity therefore not only does not exclude them from the lawful enjoyments of this life, but it supposes them to cherish and to value them, as the means which enable them to fulfil their active duties with cheerfulness and vigour. An enlightened conscience, which considers that which promotes and that which obstructs or hinders active diligence, easily decides what is excess, and what is necessary or useful relaxation. Some men, from tenderness of heart, or from ill-grounded scruples, and others from covetousness or ambition, consume their strength by incessant cares and labours, and before their time become incapable of important services, which with wiser and better management they ought to have performed. Defrauding themselves of that which is requisite for their refreshment or private comfort, their health is injured, their lives are shortened, and the interests of religion and of human society, which they were sincerely disposed to have promoted, suffer a material loss.

More generally, however, men fall into the opposite extreme; and passionately fond of amusements, are slow, careless, and unfaithful in their active duties.—By a strange perversion of their time, and of their talents, amusements become their grand object; and it is chiefly to furnish themselves with the means of procuring and enjoying them, that their active business, or professional duties are pursued with any degree of solicitude.—It is no excuse for this kind

kind of perversion, that the amusements which men follow, are not in themselves inconsistent with religion or with virtue. The abuse of an innocent enjoyment is not innocent : and gratifications, in their own nature allowable, degenerate into vices or crimes, when, in the pursuit of them, the mind becomes vain or dissipated ; when by means of them most important duties are neglected ; or when the conscience is sensibly grieved or wounded. The pleasures of social intercourse are in themselves both honourable and virtuous ; yet when on their account something far more weighty and important is neglected ; as for example, the safety of the king or of the country ; the labours of a professional office or employment ; the faithful education of children ; or the provision and government of a private family ; social intercourse becomes then indeed a criminal indulgence for which no apology can be pleaded, either to our own consciences, or before God the judge of all, however lawful or precious it might have been in different circumstances. To make it the business of every day to kill time agreeably, and when one amusement is past, to long without ceasing for another, is an abuse of the understanding, of the will, of the affections, and of the active powers, neither manly nor Christian. Alas ! an habitual inattention to purity of heart, to amendment of life, and to preparation for eternity, hath often produced, and hath often been punished by a settled and determined carelessness in the performance of the most necessary duties belonging to men's secular callings. Here, a son of levity and dissipation squanders his precious hours, as if for his manner of employing them he were not accountable to God or man. The

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most interesting affairs entrusted to him, which he alone can manage with advantage, are completely overlooked or neglected; while those who depend on him for advice, or for support, or for relief, and who have a good right to expect them from him, look and hope for them in vain. There, a daughter of vanity hurries from one place of public entertainment to another; while perhaps her tender infant languishes under a deadly disease, and sighs in vain for a mother's care. Many, on the other hand, do with disgust and aversion that which, to save appearances, they feel themselves constrained to do: and hence they do slightly, and without effect, that which cannot be well or sufficiently done without both exertion and toil. Wo to the nation, to the church, and to the army, in which men occupy important stations, and have no taste for, and find no pleasure in supporting the labours connected with them. Would you be faithful to Him who hath allotted you different relations and employments, be moderate in the pursuit of even the most innocent and lawful pleasures. Let not an attachment to the most alluring objects of present satisfaction or amusement, turn you aside from the important duties for which you were sent into the world, or hold the place assigned you: and watch your own hearts with a constant solicitude, that no present gratification may be permitted to hinder you in any circumstances, from discharging honestly, earnestly, and steadily, the trust committed to you by the Possessor and Lord of heaven and earth.

V. Fidelity to Him who hath appointed men their respective callings, requires that they shall do

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as much good in them as they have the means or opportunities to do; and that they shall manage them to the best advantage, for which their knowledge or abilities have qualified them.

I need not observe, that the purest zeal requires to be well governed; and that with the best intentions, men without prudence run the risk of doing more hurt than good in the world. Still, however, active and conscientious endeavours to discharge every obligation connected with a useful office or employment, are binding on the consciences of all the disciples of Christ. A slight discharge of professional duties may screen a man from public censure or reproach, and much more from punishment by his earthly superiors, which is yet so far from the extent of his duties, that in the sight of God he is pronounced an unfaithful servant. There are many faults or negligencies in personal duties, which though a piercing eye may discern them, bring upon the guilty little present inconvenience or disgrace. The transgressor loses not his office; he falls not under general contempt; nay perhaps, by some appearance of probity, he insinuates himself into reputation and confidence, as Absalom once stole the hearts of the people of Israel from David. But how subtly soever such a person can disguise his treachery from men, he cannot conceal it from an omniscient God, or from his own conscience.

Take an illustration of this idea from an example or two in common life. One man has a work or labour to finish within a certain period. His only solicitude is that he may not lose his credit or his honour. If he can by any means secure this, he is quite indifferent how the work is performed; and if he can only over-

reach or deceive his employer, he does not scruple to perform the work in the slightest and most superficial manner. Another man is bound as a parent, a tutor, or a friend, to care for the individuals of a particular family. He cares for them only in as far as to preserve himself from public shame or private reproach. Had he been a faithful guardian, constrained by piety and benevolence, and not by the dread of human laws, or by the respect he feels for his personal interests, he would to the utmost of his power have defended their rights, and promoted their happiness. The love of what is well pleasing to God, produces in the mind of a faithful man, what nothing else will produce, an habitual steadiness in the endeavour to please him, to the full extent of his powers and capacities; and many an anxious deliberation, and many a painful exertion, hidden from the most penetrating mortal eye. Hence the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, “ Having therefore gifts, differing according to the “ grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let “ us prophecy according to the proportion of faith ; “ or ministry, let us wait on our ministry ; or he “ that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, “ on exhortation :” and of Peter, “ As every man “ hath received the gift, even so minister the same “ one to another, as good stewards of the manifold “ grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak “ as the oracles of God : if any man minister, let “ him do it as if the ability which God giveth ; that “ God in all things may be glorified through Jesus “ Christ ^f.” Timothy is exhorted : “ Study to “ shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that “ needeth

^e Rom. xii. 6. 8.

^f 1 Pet iv. 10. 11.

“ needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the
 “ word of truth ^s.” “ Watch thou in all things,
 “ endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist,
 “ make full proof of thy ministry ^h.” Servants are
 admonished, “ Be obedient to your masters, in
 “ singleness of your heart, as unto Christ, not with
 “ eye-service, as men-pleasers ⁱ.”

VI. Personal fidelity requires, that men regard and fulfil all the duties of their callings or situations, and not merely a part of them.

Every thing is comprehended in this obligation, by which, in their different connections and circumstances, men can promote the wise and good purposes for which their situations were allotted them by Providence. Though when both cannot be performed together, duties more important ought to be preferred to duties which are less so; yet in general, as the first ought to be done, so, without necessity, the last ought not to be left undone. God demands from us a sincere desire, and a firm resolution, to exert our activity in the discharge of every obligation. Men's earthly calling is not to be considered as confined to things which they are bound to perform in an honourable office, or by a profitable employment. God hath appointed them to be mutually useful to one another in many other ways. When all their time, and study, and strength, are devoted to their professional or their secular business, and the other opportunities they possess of glorifying God, or of doing good to mankind, are neglected or are not improved, though their diligence or their activity may obtain praise from men,

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^s 2 Tim. ii. 15.^h 2 Tim. iv. 5.ⁱ Eph. vi. 5. 6.

it is not to be regarded as obedience to God; and cannot, as fidelity, be acceptable in his sight. Simplicity and godly sincerity in fulfilling the obligations which are laid on us, ought to appear by a steady and conscientious regard to every appointment of the Supreme Lawgiver: and will make men good rulers, and good subjects; good parents, and affectionate children; good masters, and faithful servants; good neighbours, and stedfast friends. The same authority enjoins the duties of all these relations; and for the performance, or neglect of every one of them, a strict account must one day be given.

VII. Personal fidelity requires that men shall do the duties of their proper stations, although every worldly motive should tempt them to neglect or to violate them.

The most difficult and important labours are often repaid, not with wealth, or honour, or applause, but with coldness and indifference, perhaps with reproach or persecution. The statesman who hath devoted many a wearisome day or sleepless night to the service of his prince, loses his office, and his family starves. The wise lawgivers and the brave defenders of their country are maliciously accused, or unjustly condemned, or suffer as malefactors. The Apostles of Christ, who shunned no fatigue, difficulty, or danger, for promoting the highest interests of mankind, were rewarded with hunger and thirst, with cold and nakedness, with stripes, imprisonments, tortures, and death. A greater than they, "who went about doing good," for his generous beneficence, was hated, blasphemed, and

and nailed to a cross. Many duties may call you to make the most painful exertions, accompanied with no present reward. Your best deeds may be ungratefully denied, or depreciated, or insidiously ascribed to ignoble or to selfish motives. When on these accounts, your hands are weak, or your knees are feeble, or your spirits are ready to sink, remember that God sees, and approves, and will abundantly recompense the least of your honest endeavours. You labour not for the world or time, but for God and for eternity; for the God who loved you with an everlasting love, and for him who was made a curse for you, that ye might be blessed. Go on therefore courageously in your sincere or disinterested services to God or to the world, notwithstanding every threatening, and all the bad usage ye may experience. If just sentiments of Him, who is the Perfection of beauty, and of the joys and sorrows of the world to come, could prevail in our minds, and dwell on our thoughts, how would they banish from the motives of our conduct, every thing mean and low? Whatever our rank or station is, how would they purify and ennoble the feelings of the heart, strengthen virtuous resolutions, and make our tempers and conduct an image of the greatness and goodness of that God whom we profess to serve. The fear of offending our relations on earth, the dread of provoking the great or the powerful; nay, the danger of incurring the wrath or resentment of the whole people of a land, would not hinder or intimidate us from hearkening to what we saw to be the call of Providence. “Thou shalt go
“to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I com-
“mand thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of
“their

“ their faces : for I am with thee to deliver thee, “ saith the Lord ^j.” Sincere and serious Christians should pray for their pastors, that the manners of the times may not seduce them to neglect any of the duties of their office, or, in the duties which they perform, to attend more to that which is ornamental than to that which is solid and edifying. In an age, when fine and highly polished composition is relished, but when iniquity abounds, and the love of many to the faith of the Gospel and to vital holiness waxeth cold, that is not perhaps the most faithful exercise of the pastoral office, which most tends to raise or to preserve the reputation of men. They whose decisions give the tone to the public voice, with regard to that which is accounted an improved or elegant taste, hear one with satisfaction, and applaud his sentiments and stile, who excites, keeps up, and rewards their attention, by lively images, picturesque representations, and by periods turned in a new and delicate manner; especially if he also charms the ear with a sweet and engaging manner or voice. They assemble in crowds to the exhibitions of such an orator, for the same reason for which at other times they crowd to a concert, or to a theatre; and perhaps as little to their spiritual profit or advantage. But if “ the bodily “ presence of another is weak, and his speech “ contemptible,” especially if he shall attack fashionable errors or favourite vices, the more gentle will whisper—“ What a weariness is it!” and the more violent exclaim, “ What doth this babler say ?” Some in the higher, and a greater number in the middle and lower ranks of life, who have no relish for artificial oratory,

oratory, and who despise pompous declamation, know when the sentiments and feelings of their hearts are touched, or are deeply impressed; and in this situation are sensible of all the effect of a natural and unaffected style. They love and esteem him, who by a tender and pathetic address, melts and interests them, or it may be, draws tears from their eyes. Perhaps they over-rate his talents, and despise the talents of other men, who unfold, with greater depth of thought, the doctrines of the Gospel, the deceits of the human heart, or the graces and duties of the Christian life. Hence ministers are often in danger of deviating from the strain of preaching best calculated to edify, to another more acceptable to the populace, or better received by the polite audiences. What pastoral and steady fidelity in all these cases requires, must be obvious to every man's serious reflections.

But examples will as readily occur to us from other professions, as from the situation of ministers. One class of men will censure a judge as if he did unrighteousness in judgment, by respecting the person of the poor, when he redresses their real grievances; and when on another occasion he repells their ill-founded claims, another class of men will accuse him, as if "he honoured the person of the mighty^k." The prince who commences a negotiation for preventing the hostilities of a neighbouring kingdom, is charged with a pusillanimous spirit, as if he meanly betrayed the public honour: and the prince who engages in war, is pronounced headstrong or rash, as if he were regardless of the blood or treasure of his subjects. Statesmen, who, by lenient
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^k Lev. xix. 15.

measures, endeavour to extinguish rebellion, are arraigned as if they healed the wounds of a nation slightly, and by deceitful palliations, caused them afterwards to break out with greater violence. Designs against the just rights of a nation, a harsh and cruel temper, or at least a disposition to imbibe causeless jealousies and suspicions, are in like manner ascribed to another man, who observes the first appearances of disaffection or sedition, and who by necessary restraints and severity, checks their beginnings or their progress.

Many other examples might be mentioned, in which faithfulness to Him, who hath appointed men's stations or their peculiar offices in this life, must often expose them to the slander, or to the unjust animadversions and reproaches of those among whom they live. But every sound understanding must perceive what personal fidelity requires of them in all such cases. It requires them to be equally superior in discharging their duty to the undeserved favour, and to the unjust reproaches of the world; and to disdain to be influenced by the motives of worldly men, in that which they are bound to do as the servants of God.

VIII. Fidelity in the duties of our proper callings ought ever to be accompanied with prayer to God, and an habitual and devout dependence on him for his blessing.

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth in vain ¹.” “Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights ^m.” “He maketh

¹ Psal cxxvii. 1.

^m James i. 17.

“maketh poor, and he maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth upⁿ.” He guides the heart of one to adopt measures which prove ultimately successful, and he permits another to form a plan which issues in disappointment. By the operation of natural causes, or by the influence of Providence on the follies and passions of moral agents, the most important advantages are attained; the greatest hindrances are removed or overcome; the honest purposes of the weakest agents are easily effected; and the most active opposition is baffled or surmounted; and these favourable events happen in the precise moment necessary for his good, who trusts in God, who pours out his soul before him, and who makes him his confidence and his refuge. “For this shall every one who is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found^o.”

But the habits of prayer are still more important to us, if we have any reliance on the grace which alone can enable us to fulfil the duties of our calling, amidst the difficulties or temptations which combine to break or to corrupt our fidelity; or if we would preserve a persuasion which we ought never to relinquish, that God will never suffer any man ultimately to lose by his steadfast fidelity in his personal duties, or finally to gain, by his obstinate perversion of them. “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and ye shall not only receive abundance of grace, but the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Would you, my brethren, approve yourselves thorough Christians,

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ⁿ 1 Sam. ii. 7.^o Psal. xxxii. 6.

stians, and maintain consciences void of offence towards God, and towards man, apply these instructions not for the purpose of judging the conduct of other men, but to assist you in examining minutely and impartially, your own integrity, and your own conduct. God hath assigned to every one his peculiar calling. To every one therefore must this enquiry be important. If as careless stewards of the gifts of God, ye shall disregard the trust committed to you, or neglect your appointed work, you can neither maintain serenity of mind, nor a well-grounded confidence in the favour of God. While ye contemplate your different departments of duty, and the variety of the means and talents entrusted to you, resolve therefore to serve God as far as ye can in your several lines of life, by promoting his kind and gracious purposes for the good of your fellow-men. Abuse not your gifts or talents, by devoting them to pursuits which are opposite to, or are even different from those for which they were bestowed on you. To endeavour to do the will of God on earth with the same cheerfulness and diligence with which it is done in heaven, is one great branch of preparation for the employments and joys of the upper world. If for this end, much self-denial must be exercised, and many a burden, and much toil or fatigue often and patiently endured, all this is suited to a state of trial. But the difficulties and temptations to which ye are exposed, are fast hastening to a period; and to those who shall finally overcome them, Christ hath promised a glorious reward indeed. “To him that overcometh, will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as
“ I also

“ I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.”

Consider the strong excitements to the fidelity which I have endeavoured to inculcate, which the spirit of my text suggests. The duties of your callings are a charge given you, or an appointment laid upon you, by your Sovereign Ruler and Judge. Heathens have considered self-murder as a desertion of the post in which one has been placed by Providence. He also deserts his post, who, in order to avoid fatigue, danger or reproach, declines the duties of his particular calling, station, or relations in life. The guilt is undoubtedly diminished, but it is not extinguished when this flows from an attention to other objects, useful in their own nature to society or to the church of Christ. But that attention was not required of him, which is incompatible with the duties of his own particular station, even though he is sufficiently qualified for the additional work which he voluntarily undertakes. The Captain of salvation, the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, was faithful to Him who appointed him. None ever had, or could have, a calling which demanded such difficult and toilsome obedience, or such exquisite sufferings as his were. Yet with unwearied constancy, and unshaken resolution, he fulfilled the duties prescribed to him, till he could appeal to the Father, and say, “ I have glorified thee on the earth ; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” His fidelity is worthy of your highest admiration. But it is not enough that you admire, you must imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, if ye would prove that ye are his disciples indeed. He hath left you an example ; and your gratitude to

him will then discover itself to be genuine when ye follow his steps; when the same mind is in you which was in him; and when ye walk as he also walked. It may be the will of God, that in following your Redeemer, many cares, toils, burdens, mortifications, and sufferings must be endured. But these shall all be forgotten, or shall be remembered with satisfaction, as waters which ye have passed, when that last sentence shall be pronounced, “Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

I conclude with observing, what must be admitted to be naturally suggested by the subject, that if an honest and faithful discharge of social and relative duties were the whole of religion, and if the obligation of supreme love to God were supposed to be dissolved, even on such terms as these no man could be justified by works. In fidelity to conscience, and in zealous endeavours for promoting the glory of God and the good of mankind, Archbishop Usher was perhaps exceeded by few of his own, or of any other order. Yet we find among his last, what were certainly none of his worst words, “Lord forgive my sins of omission.” Though his conduct was exemplary, and was approved by every candid man, his own conscience knew many of his defects and omissions; and he was well aware, that the All-seeing Eye of God discerned many more. Even in the discharge of the duties of their secular callings, men of the worthiest characters are far from having attained that which was within their reach; are far from being already perfect, and after all their best attainments, have need to pray, “Lord enter not into judgment with thy servants.”

SERMON XV.



THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON NATIONAL HAPPINESS.



ISAIAH lv. 3.^a

INSTEAD OF THE THORN SHALL COME UP THE FIR-TREE, AND INSTEAD
OF THE BRIER SHALL COME UP THE MYRTLE-TREE.

THE verses preceding our text contain a prophecy of the rapid triumphs of Christianity when it first appeared in the world, and when difficulties stood in the way of its progress, which no power, less than the power of God, could have enabled it to surmount: a circumstance highly honourable to the religion of Jesus, and no inconsiderable proof of its heavenly origin. But the argument appears in full force, when, to the miraculous propagation of the Gospel, we add, its miraculous effects on the hearts and lives of those who believe. Of these, the words I have read in your hearing, give us a beautiful and lively picture: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the
“ fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the
“ myrtle-

^a Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge, Jan. 5. 1756; and published separately at that time.

“myrtle-tree.” The word of grace, accompanied by the influences of the blessed Spirit, shall work a change on the tempers and inclinations of men, as thorough and entire, as if the thorn were transformed into a fir-tree, or the brier into a myrtle-tree. And in consequence of this inward change, those who before were as pricking briars or grieving thorns^b, mischievous, or at best unprofitable, shall now resemble the fir-tree, which affords a refreshing shade to the weary traveller, or the myrtle-tree, which yields a fragrant and odoriferous fruit. “Hateful, “and hating one another,” was once their character; but now they are taught of God to love one another. Formerly, they were the plagues and disturbers; now, they become the ornament, the delight, the defence of society. Once, they were fierce and savage, rough and barbarous, malicious and revengeful: now, they are kind and gentle, courteous and humane, meek and forgiving. Instead of biting and devouring one another; like brethren they dwell together in unity. By fruitfulness in works of righteousness and charity, they are blessings to mankind. They live beloved. They die lamented.

Such are the native fruits, not of a name to live, not of a form of godliness, but of inward vital religion. But, in all ages, there have been too many, who falsely call themselves Christians, and who instead of regarding the weighty matters of the law, righteousness and judgment, mercy and goodness, truth and uprightness, can allow themselves to indulge in cruelty and oppression, deceit and injustice, artifice and treachery. They profess a mighty veneration for religion; but, by a conduct in civil

^b Ezek. ii. 6. xxviii. 24. Micah vii. 4.

vil life, the reverse of what religion would dictate, they give occasion to her open enemies to insult or reproach her, as causing, or at least as not preventing their enormities.

Hard indeed is the fate of religion, if she is condemned and suffers for the faults of those over whom she has no influence, and who never once asked her counsel, or submitted to her reproofs! Is the nature and tendency of religion, of such difficult investigation, that we can discover it no where but in the conduct of men, who, while they wear the garb of her friends, are in truth her dangerous and deadly foes?

Religion, my brethren, did it indeed rule in the heart, would effectually emancipate men from those passions of the world, and restrain them from thus disturbing the public peace, Nay, it would powerfully instigate them to promote sincerely and successfully the happiness of mankind. This I shall now attempt to prove, and for that purpose have read to you the words of our text. They would naturally lead me to unfold the astonishing nature, the powerful and extensive operation, and the salutary consequences of regenerating grace. But I must greatly trespass on your time and patience, did I attempt, in a single discourse, to lead you through so wide a field. I shall therefore confine myself to one branch of the subject; the benign influence of vital piety on national happiness. And to give you a prospect of this in a way level to the meanest capacity, I shall briefly illustrate the temper and behaviour of the religious man in some of the more important stations and characters in life, by which the prosperity of nations is most deeply affected,

Has the most high God given to the man that fears him, a kingdom, and majesty, and honour, and glory? Uncontroulable, unlimited power, he knows is the prerogative of God alone. None can justly claim it but He who made and upholds all things. None is qualified to possess it but He who can never do wrong, because he is infinitely wise, and just, and good. The power, even of God, is limited in its exercise, by his wisdom and equity: and power without such limits, is weakness, not perfection. As therefore the pious prince feels not the inclination, so he desires not the power, of gratifying himself at the expence of the fortunes, the ease, the liberties, the lives of his subjects. A right to make the innocent miserable, he justly deems as palpable a contradiction as a right to do wrong, or as authority to rebel against God. He detests the absurd and impious doctrine, that the common Parent of mankind has subjected millions to the pride, ambition, frolic, caprice, or arbitrary will of an imperfect fellow-mortal. He views the meanest of his subjects as creatures formed by the same God, as endowed with the same faculties and sensations, with the same desire of happiness and love of liberty, which he himself possesses; yea, as redeemed by the same precious blood, by which he obtains salvation, and as candidates for the same immortal glory to which he aspires. He views himself as advanced to superior dignity, not to enslave and oppress, not to fleece and plunder his subjects; but that every one, protected by his authority, may enjoy, without disturbance, his just rights and innocent pleasures, and lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. The highest light in which he regards himself,

self, is, as the father of his people, the guardian of their privileges, the minister of God to them for good, bound by a burdensome, though honourable office, to attend continually on this very thing^c. Such were the sentiments of the man according to God's own heart, 2 Sam. v. 12. "And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake;" a passage, which plainly implies, that government is a divine ordinance, not for the ease and grandeur of the prince, but for the security and welfare of the people.

From any earthly tribunal, the prince may have little or nothing to fear. But he knows that God, who intrusted him with such superior advantages for extensive usefulness, will ere long call him to shew how he has improved these advantages. Princes may be gods in the eyes of men, but they are but men in the eyes of God. Death will strip them of their royalty, and level them with the meanest of the people. The prince, as well as the peasant, must appear at His bar, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. If the mightiest monarch has dishonoured God, and injured his subjects, he shall then receive for the wrong which he has done; for with God there is no respect of persons. The great offender shall be greatly punished; and the exalted character he once possessed, will only expose him to the more dreadful vengeance.

In the mean time, views of the awful doom which awaits the wicked ruler, are to the pious prince no uneasy restraint. The practice of his duty is his pleasure and delight. His subjects he looks upon as

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^c Rom. xiii. 4. 6.

his neighbours, and he loves his neighbours as himself. Full of fatherly affection for every one of them, and of unfeigned concern for their welfare, he employs all his influence and authority to preserve order and peace, to secure property, to prevent injuries, to redress wrongs, to punish offenders, to suppress sedition, to guard his dominions against foreign invasion, to encourage honest industry, and to promote religion and virtue, those surest props of national happiness. He is vigilant to espy, active to prevent, whatever may hazard the public weal; careful to discover, and forward to apply the best means to advance it.

The wisdom, the justice, the mercy, which shine with so bright a lustre in all the administrations of the Supreme Ruler, are the pattern he copies after. He will not do wrong himself: he will not voluntarily suffer wrong to be done by others. He intrusts the execution of the laws to men fearing God and hating covetousness, that justice may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. But mercy, as well as righteousness, upholds his throne ^d. His mercy tempers the rigour of justice: his humanity softens rebellion itself into loyalty and gratitude. In every case, except when indulgence to the criminal would prove cruelty to the public, he forgives his offending subjects, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him. And when the safety of individuals, or the bleeding wounds of a state, require severe and painful remedies, he applies these remedies with a reluctant hand, and with a tender and compassionate heart.

Convinced

^d Prov. xx. 28.

Convinced that the good or bad success of every enterprise depends on the smiles and frowns of heaven, he implores the wisdom and the blessing of heaven to animate his councils and his government. As a man, as a Christian, as a prince, he squares his behaviour by that unerring rule, the word of God. He does not indulge and cherish in himself the irregularities or vices, which he punishes in his subjects: but restrains his own passions and appetites, by the laws of reason and religion; and learns to rule others, by having learned in the first place, through the teaching of the Spirit of God, to rule well his own spirit.

Happy the nation which God has blessed with such a sovereign! like the sun in the firmament he spreads his salutary rays, and dispenses his refreshing influence to all around him. The force of his example avails more than even the awe of his authority. He scatters wickedness with his eye ^e. He puts to silence the lips of flattery with his frown. But he searches out and encourages modest worth. Distinguished abilities, distinguished integrity, distinguished services to the public, never solicit his favour in vain. The greatest fitness for an office is the surest and most effectual recommendation. His eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with him: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve him ^f.

Let us now descend from the throne, and survey the influence of genuine Christianity on great men, and on men in public offices.

True piety and virtue brighten and dignify every other distinction. Religion animates the great man with such noble principles of action, as carry him

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^e Prov. xx. 8.^f Psal. ci. 6.

above the mercenary views which govern earthly and unsanctified minds. He disdains the mean and little arts of acquiring and preserving riches, to which men of a narrow, selfish, interested spirit, can easily stoop. Spiritual and heavenly blessings he ardently breathes after, and vigorously strives to obtain. But towards the good things of the present life his affections are moderate. He will not sacrifice the pleasures of conscious goodness to obtain the best of them. Inspired with a generous disinterested concern for the happiness of his country, and for the prosperity of the church of God; whatever endangers these, affects him in the deepest and most sensible manner. For these, he is willing to spend, and to be spent: and wealth, and power, and dignity, appear to him base and contemptible, when not improved to promote these excellent purposes. He loves to be useful. Yet he would rather be useful in the lowest sphere, than adopt the unchristian maxim, of doing evil that good may come. He is well apprized, that places of honour and profit are weighty and burdensome. And though the station which Providence allots him may be inferior to that to which his rank and abilities seem to entitle him, he believes that it is the best and fittest for him; and he bends all his endeavours to do honour to his Christian profession, by faithfully discharging the duties of that station.

Does the sincere Christian sit in council? and is his advice asked in the important concerns of war and peace? His eye is single, and therefore full of light. Integrity and uprightness preserve him from devising schemes, which may aggrandize himself and his family, at the hazard of the public good.

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His lips shall not speak wickedness, nor his tongue utter deceit. Till he die, he will not remove his integrity from him. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. His heart shall not reproach him as long as he lives ^g. And as self-interest does not blind his councils, so neither do obstinacy or pride pervert them. He loves his own sentiments, not because they are his own, but because they appear to him to be just and right. He is open to light, and as soon as he is convinced that his sentiments are wrong, he cheerfully renounces them. Let a wise scheme for the public good be planned by his fiercest opposer, he rejoices in the success of that scheme. Conscious of the purity of his intentions, he fears not the exactest scrutiny, or the minutest survey of his conduct. He feels not the gloomy suspicions and jealousies, to which the dark designs of corrupt politicians continually expose them. To such a statesman, none but the weak or the wicked can be an enemy: none but the foolish or the unrighteous can rise up against him ^h.

Is the Christian chosen to represent his fellow-subjects in parliament? He will not sacrifice to friendship, or to party, his steady resolution to seek the good of his king and country. He is not greatly solicitous whom his conduct shall please, or whom it may offend. But though the court should neglect him, or his constituents frown upon him, with freedom and courage he speaks what his duty demands of him. With a watchful eye he observes, with an honest warmth he opposes, every attack on the constitution of his country. He is studious in devising good laws, and active in promoting them.

And

^g Job xxvii. 4.—6.

^h Job xxvii. 7.

And when he has contributed to enact them, he pays them a becoming deference in his own behaviour, and does not, as is too common, expose them to the contempt of others, by transgressing them himself. His personal interest may often be hurt, and sometimes even his character may suffer, by his well-meant attempts to serve an ungrateful prince, or an ungrateful people. But though he values a good name, he will not purchase it at the expence of what he values more, a good conscience. He would rather be honest, than be thought so. His record is in heaven, and his witness on high. And it appears to him a light or a little thing, to be judged of man's judgment, since He who judgeth him is the Lord.

Is one in whom the religious principle bears rule, advanced to the important office of a judge? Through his uprightness, which can neither be bribed nor biassed, justice has its free course, and righteous laws are impartially executed. Under habitual impressions, that the sentences pronounced by him shall be reviewed at a higher tribunal, he attends minutely to every cause, he hears the small as well as the great, and judges without respect of persons, between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him ⁱ. He despises the gain of oppression, and shakes his hands from holding of bribes ^j. When severity is needful, he will not be soothed by ill-placed pity, nor daunted by the number, or rank, or power of transgressors, to relax that severity. He puts on righteousness, and it clothes him: his judgment is as a robe and a diadem. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: he is a father

ⁱ Deut. i. 16. 17.

^j Isa. xxxiii. 15.

ther to the poor, and the cause which he knows not he searches out. He shields the persons, the characters, the possessions of his fellow-subjects, against the encroachments of fraud and violence. He breaks the jaws of the wicked, and plucks the spoil out of his teeth. He delivereth the needy when he crieth, the oppressed also, and him that hath no helper. When the ear hears him, then it blesses him: and when the eye sees him, it gives witness to him^k. Such men our country hath seen, and such men she still sees in the highest seats of judicature. Such, not to derogate from others, was Sir Matthew Hale in the days of our fathers: such was Lord Newhall in our own days: men, whose distinguished abilities did them less honour than their inflexible integrity, and their distinguished regard to the sacred institutions, of the despised religion of Jesus. And we dare challenge the most determined infidel to say, if a principle of devotion diminished any of their qualifications, natural or acquired; or even in the smallest degree impaired their inclination or ability, to be a terror to evil-doers, and a comfort to the honest, the quiet, and the peaceable.

No, my brethren. As religion animates us to make the right improvement of our natural talents, so it will always tend to promote their activity and vigour. Wise sentiments, and prudent schemes, are not to be expected, where the mind, agitated by unruly appetite, is as the troubled sea, whose waves continually cast forth mire and dirt. A mind which enjoys inward serenity, is least in danger of committing important oversights: for such a mind is fittest to examine objects calmly, and to view them in eve-

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^k Job xxix. 11.—17.

ry varying point of light. But can his mind be serene, who doubts whether there is or is not a God : while of this he is certain, that, if there is a God, that Almighty God is his enemy ?

If men of genius embrace principles subversive of natural or of revealed religion, this cannot flow from their attention to common sense, or to matter of fact ; but must be occasioned by some absurd refinement in metaphysics, which they have unhappily imbibed. And is there no danger, lest, however honestly disposed they may otherwise be, the same spirit of refinement should follow them from religious disquisitions to the ordinary affairs of life, and pervert their judgment of the one, as it has already perverted them with regard to the other ?

Hitherto I have viewed the wisdom and goodness of the prince, the counsellor, the parliament man, and the judge, as advancing, in their various spheres, the public welfare. No less important to the security of a nation, is the fortitude of the soldier. It well deserves to be considered whether the sense of religion is friendly, or is hurtful to martial valour. In Solomon's days it was deemed friendly. Prov. xxviii. 1. " The wicked fly when no man pursueth : " but the righteous are bold as a lion." If bad men rush upon death without terror ; their hardiness has no other source than blindness and stupidity. Did they duly consider the wrath and fiery indignation which is ready to devour them, fear would take hold upon them, and terror would overwhelm them. It is possible, however, that their natural courage may support them for a time. But permit me to add, what fatal experience has often taught us, their
courage

courage may perhaps forsake them in the critical hour, when it would have stood them and their country too, in the greatest stead. One day they despise their enemies; they dream of nothing but victories and triumphs, and when girding on the harness, boast as though they were putting it off ¹. And the next day a sudden panic seizes them; they start at the shaking of a leaf, and basely turn their back at the appearance of an enemy.—But is he, whose heart is fixed trusting in God, called upon to hazard his life in the public cause? Convinced, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father, and that by him the very hairs of our head are numbered ^m: he is not slavishly afraid of ten thousand people, who set themselves against him round about ⁿ. Though thousands should fall at his right hand, and ten thousand at his left, he knows, that, as long as life is a blessing, the deadly stroke shall not come nigh to him ^o. In the midst of confusion, and horror, and garments rolled in blood, he remains serene and intrepid. The thoughts of dying for his country, and living in a better world with his Saviour and his God, animate him to the most difficult and hazardous enterprizes. He is strong, and plays the man for his people, and for the cities of his God ^p. By faith, he boldly encounters dangers, waxes valiant in fight, escapes the edge of the sword; yea, turns to flight the armies of the aliens ^q. So true is the observation of a celebrated sceptic ^r, that religious motives inspire a courage insurmountable by

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¹ 1 Kings xx. 11.^m Matt. x. 29. 30.ⁿ Psal. iii. 6.^o Psal. xci. 7.^p 2 Sam. x. 12.^q Heb. xi. 34.

Mr. David Hume's history of Britain, Vol. I. p. 81.

any human obstacle. We need not go back for instances of this, to the times of the Maccabees, nor to the bold and heroic exploits of the persecuted Waldenses. Who were the men, and what their characters, who, in the late war, with courage, with conduct, and with success, carried on the siege of Louisbourg, that strong and well fortified city? Were they drunkards? Were they Sabbath-breakers? Were they men who profaned the name of God? Were they despisers of the blessed Redeemer? No, my brethren. They were heroes led forth to battle from their shops and farms, by a warm love to religion and to their native land. They were men inexperienced in war, who had many of them, never till then seen a siege, or even a battle: but, who, committing to God the success of their hazardous undertaking, and resigning their lives to his disposal, were inspired, in a manner next to miraculous, with such undaunted resolution, and indefatigable activity, as struck their enemies with surprize and terror. It was God who girded them with strength, and made their way perfect. He made their feet like hinds feet, and set them safe on their high places. He taught their hands to war, so that a bow of steel was broken by their arms^s. Happy the people! for whom the Spirit of God raiseth up such a banner^t.

It is now time to consider the temper and behaviour of private Christians, and to shew that this also is calculated to promote national peace and prosperity.

That mind being in them which was also in Christ, they look not every man on his own things, but

^s Psal. xviii. 32.—34.

^t Isa. l'x 19.

but every man on the things of others also ^u. They are generous, public-spirited, and bent to promote the good of society, not only by their own orderly and pure manners, but by opening their purse, and hazarding their persons, when their duty requires them to do so. By their eminent and exemplary virtue, and by their fervent supplications at a throne of grace, they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel ^v, the beauty, the strength, the security of their native land.

The follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, will not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of the people ^w. He renders to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. He is subject to the lawful commands of superiors, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake ^x. Whether the sovereign power is in the hands of one, or in the hands of many; whether the prince is absolute, or limited; whether he came to the throne by election, by succession, or by conquest: the Christian esteems obedience a just and reasonable return for protection. When nothing is required of him, inconsistent with the fundamental laws of his country, or with the more unchangeable laws of God, his obedience is without reserve. If indeed any thing is enjoined him, contrary to the dictates of his conscience, he has learned to obey God rather than man ^y. But no wise prince will insist on such commands. Force cannot enlighten the conscience, though it may tempt men to run counter to its dictates. If it does the last, the sovereign is a loser.

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^u Phil. ii. 4. 5.^v 2 Kings xiii. 14.^w Exod. 22. 28.^x Rom. xiii. 5. 7.^y Acts iv. 19.

For the subject having in one instance preferred his imaginary interest to his real duty, and shaken off the restraints of religion, he is prepared for doing so in other instances, and emboldened to commit perjury, treason, or any other wickedness, when a temptation presents itself sufficiently strong. Wisely therefore has the Apostle Peter linked together the precepts of fearing God and honouring the king ²: because if men revere not the laws of the Sovereign of heaven, the laws of the greatest earthly sovereign will not command their inward respect.

The good man, full of gratitude for the blessings he enjoys under lawful rulers, offers prayers, and supplications, and intercessions, and thanksgivings, for kings and all that are in authority ². Deeply sensible of his own defects, he makes every candid allowance for human frailty, and will not murmur or complain at lesser imprudences in the conduct of governors. Far less will he attempt to form parties against an administration, or to raise rebellion against a government, because his covetousness is not satiated, or his ambition gratified. Feeling what cares, and difficulties, and embarrassments, attend the direction of a single family; he rather pities, than envies those who are burdened with the weightier charge of watching over populous states. He blesses God there are any such friends of mankind, who can cheerfully sacrifice their own ease and pleasure, to diffuse happiness to others. By every mark of gratitude and esteem, he endeavours to sweeten to his rulers the fatigues of government: and his most ardent addresses ascend daily to heaven, for the preservation of lives so precious and important.

Such

² 1 Pet. ii. 17.

² 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2.

Such is the conduct of the private Christian, with regard to his rulers. Let us now view his behaviour to his fellow-subjects.

True religion will teach him to renounce the hidden works of darkness and dishonesty, and to abhor equivocations, ambiguous expressions, and every other sneaking method of practising deceit or fraud. On all occasions, he speaks what he means, and sincerely intends to perform what he promises. The strictest forms of law are no security superior to his bare word. He is true to his trusts, faithful to his engagements, plain and upright in his professions, fair and honest in his dealings. He studies to be quiet, and to do his own business ^b, without molesting other men in theirs. If it be possible, as much as lieth in him, he lives peaceably with all men ^c. And, in the various relations of life, in which Providence has placed him, as a father, a son, a husband, a master, a servant, he adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things ^d.

But religion teaches him to love mercy, as well as to do justly ^e. With a pleasant admiration he contemplates the blessed Redeemer, as delighting to exercise goodness, and mercy, and loving-kindness, on the earth. And beholding these glories of the Lord, he is gradually changed into the same image from glory to glory. He rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep ^f. He does to others, as he would wish that they, if in his circumstances, should do to him ^g. As he has opportunity, he does good to all men, especially to the household

^b 1 Thess. iv. 11.

^c Rom. xii. 18.

^d Tit. ii. 10.

^e Mic. vi. 8.

^f Rom. xii. 15.

^g Matt. vii. 12.

hold of faith ^h: that is, to adopt the explication of these words given by an eminently great man on a like occasion ⁱ, chiefly to those, who are most nearly related to him, who most need his help, and who best deserve it. Yet, he confines not to these, his good offices. He repays even injuries with kindness, and thus overcomes evil with good ^j. And though too often his friendly offices may meet with ungrateful returns, he is not weary in well-doing, knowing, that in due season, he shall reap if he faint not ^k. Yea, already he reaps a glorious reward, in the generous pleasure he feels, from relieving, or at least mitigating the distresses of his fellow-mortals.

His fund for charity is not impaired by rioting and drunkenness, by chambering and wantonness, by luxury and prodigality: but is daily increased by the blessing of God on his honest industry. Idleness, and sloth, and extravagance, he justly views as the bane of society. Instead of diminishing the national wealth by means like these, he labours diligently in his secular calling, working with his hands the thing which is good ^l, that thus he may in some measure recompense society for the blessings he derives from it.

Thrice happy period! when Christian principles, deeply rooted in the heart, shall thus influence all ranks, from the king on the throne, to the meanest peasant: when the Lord of hosts shall be for a crown

^h Gal. vi. 10.

ⁱ The late Dr. William Wishart in his sermon before the society. It is pity the public has not been favoured with that excellent discourse.

^j Rom. xii. 21.

^k Gal. vi. 9.

^l Eph. iv. 28.

crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty to the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate ^m.

Say, ye sons of infidelity, do not the precepts of Christianity injoin, and do not the doctrines of Christianity tend to promote such a temper and conduct? And is such a temper and conduct noxious to social happiness? Would it be profitable to society, that every one should make his own particular interest, the standard by which to measure the good of the community: or should pursue his own selfish schemes even when they are evidently destructive of the public welfare? And is the world indeed less happy, for the public spirit and disinterested benevolence, which still remains in it?

No, will the infidel reply, we love these amiable virtues, and would feel the sincerest joy, could we discern their influence on all ranks and degrees of men. I shall not arraign your sincerity. The Gospel teaches me never to pass a harsh judgment on any, without the clearest evidence. But if you indeed are lovers of mankind, bethink yourselves a little, if zeal for infidelity, if opposition to religion, is a wise and proper method of testifying your love.

What mighty advantage will the world reap, from the increase of your proselytes? Is the pious man the worse prince; or, is he the worse subject, because he is pious? Does religion promote oppression and tyranny in the prince, or does it excite sedition and rebellion in the subject? When the wicked is in authority, do the people rejoice? And when the righteous bear rule, do they mourn? Will the sub-
ject,

^m Isa. xxviii. 5. 6.

ject, who has learned of his Saviour to be meek and humble, perplex and embarrass the state, or sacrifice the peace of his neighbour, to caprice and frolic? Whence come wars, and fightings, and strife, and debate? Come they not from pride and avarice, and unruly passion? Is then that principle of grace, which teaches us to mortify our corrupt passions and appetites, an enemy to the tranquillity of mankind? Will high and honourable thoughts of Him, who is the Perfection of beauty, blind us to that beauty in creatures, which is all derived from him as its source, and which reflects, though but obscurely and imperfectly, his superior lustre? Will thankfulness to the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, promote ingratitude to our fellow-creatures, whom he employs as instruments, in conveying to us his benefits? Where is the connexion, between loving God, even the Father; and hating man, who was made after the similitude of God? Is our attaining, what is more rare and difficult, the love of God, whom we have not seen, any hindrance to our attaining what is more common and easy, the love of our brother, whom we have seen? When we esteem and love the Deity, we esteem and love justice, and truth, and goodness, and mercy: and will esteem of these moral perfections, inspire us with the opposite qualities, of injustice, deceit, malice, and cruelty?—Consult experience. Are those, most active and diligent, most generous and public-spirited, who are lovers of ease and of pleasure, more than lovers of God?—But perhaps you would indulge men in the love of the Deity, if you could extinguish the uneasy apprehensions of his wrath. Fatal
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and destructive benefit! if ye indeed suppose that this would be a benefit to the world; which emboldens the knave to perpetrate the most base and atrocious crimes, if he has subtilty enough to conceal them from mortal eyes. Is there, think you, no danger lest this should prove the unhappy consequence of your so much boasted friendly intentions? Does he, who fears not God, bid fairest for regarding his duty to man? Will he be strictest in practising virtue, who entertains the loosest sentiments of the obligations of virtue? Will he, who neither hopes for nor dreads a world to come, be peculiarly scrupulous of violating the rules of justice and equity, of meekness and forgiveness, of benevolence and charity? Will a contempt of the Supreme Lawgiver secure respect or obedience to his laws? There are men whose understandings are too delicate to relish the mysteries of the Gospel, or the miracles which attest them, who can swallow, without reluctance, all these shocking absurdities.

In the days of our fathers, the most celebrated sceptics retained so much modesty as only to plead that atheism was innocent, and religion unnecessary. But our modern sceptics, with a more hardy boldness, pronounce the religious principle malignant and hurtful. That species of devotion which is suitable to the discoveries the Supreme Being has made of himself to the understanding, occasions (if we may believe these men) the most enormous ravages in the human breast, and subverts every reasonable principle of conduct and behaviour^a. Every

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^a Mr. David Hume's *History of Great Britain*, Vol. I. page 62. first edition. This passage, with a few verbal emendations,

ry elegant pleasure or amusement it utterly annihilates, each vice or corruption of mind it promotes.

is in Vol. VI. quarto edition, 1770, p. 96. 97. As I did not, in delivering the sermon, repeat the whole of that remarkable passage, I shall here transcribe it.

“ The fire of devotion, excited by novelty, and inflamed by
 “ opposition, had so possessed the minds of the Scottish reform-
 “ ers, that all rites and ornaments, and even order of worship,
 “ were disdainfully rejected as useless burdens, retarding the
 “ imagination in its rapturous ecstasies, and stinting the opera-
 “ tions of that Divine Spirit, by which they supposed themselves
 “ to be animated. A mode of worship was established, the most
 “ naked and most simple imaginable ; one that borrowed nothing
 “ from the senses ; but reposed itself entirely on the contempla-
 “ tion of that Divine Essence, which discovers itself to the under-
 “ standing only. This species of devotion, so suitable to the Su-
 “ preme Being, but so little suitable to human frailty, was ob-
 “ served to occasion the most enormous ravages in the breast, and
 “ to subvert every rational principle of conduct and behaviour.
 “ The mind straining for these extraordinary raptures, reaching
 “ them by short glances, succumbing again under its own weak-
 “ ness, rejecting all exterior aid of pomp and ceremony, was so
 “ occupied in this inward life, that it fled from every intercourse
 “ of society, and from every sweet or cheerful amusement, which
 “ could soften or humanize the character. It was obvious to all
 “ discerning eyes, and had not escaped the king’s, that by the
 “ prevalence of fanaticism, a gloomy and sullen disposition esta-
 “ blished itself among the people ; a spirit obstinate and dange-
 “ rous ; independent and disorderly ; animated equally with a
 “ contempt of authority, and a hatred to every other mode of re-
 “ ligion, particularly to the Catholic. In order to mellow these
 “ humours, king James endeavoured to infuse a small tincture of
 “ superstition into the national worship, &c.”

Fond as our author here seems to be, of the superstitious species of devotion, there is little reason to doubt, that, had a more pompous ritual been established among us, his wit and humour would have been employed in dressing it in a fool’s-coat. He has given us a specimen of his inclination and abilities for such a task,

motes °. Such is the picture a modern historian gives us of the hideous effects of what he terms the Protestant fanaticism ^p; especially as it operated on the Scottish reformers in the reign of king James ^q; and on the Presbyterians, and other puritans, in the reign of his successor king Charles I. ^r. A little attention, however, may convince us, that the charge, though artfully enough disguised, is not chiefly levelled against any doctrine or practice, peculiar to dissenters, peculiar to Protestants, or even peculiar to Christians: but against that first and great command of nature's law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." An open attack on that precept, must have alarmed the religious principle to a vigorous self-defence. But by blending together, in one common description, the opposite properties and effects of rational devotion, and of enthusiastic fervour, there was room to hope, that the unthinking reader might apply to rational devotion, the reproach due only to enthusiastic fervour. Let us, however, strip from his insinuations of the evil tendency of devotion, the ornaments of eloquence and sophistry, and the naked argument will amount to no more than this: "Enthusiasm, false religion, and wrong notions of God, promoted, in times of

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page 64, (the editor has not been able to discover *this* quotation in the quarto edition, and supposes it to have been omitted there) in his polite and pious reflection on king James; "He regarded that posture (kneeling at the sacrament) as the most respectful, because the most uneasy." With what admirable propriety and decorum does so genteel a writer, find fault, page 9, with the rustic severity of the Scottish clergy to king James!

° Hume's Hist. Vol. I. p. 303.

^p Ib. p. 60.

^q Ib. p. 62.

^r Ib. p. 303.

“ public confusion, every vice and corruption of
 “ mind: therefore the species of devotion most
 “ suitable to the Supreme Being, and most agree-
 “ able to reason, subverts every reasonable princi-
 “ ple of conduct and behaviour. The effects of fals-
 “ hood have been pernicious: therefore the effects
 “ of the reverse of falshood, are pernicious also.”

But all is not fanaticism which some men affirm to be so. And there was much of true religion, as well as much of false religion, in that period. To that period therefore I appeal, as a proof of the happy effects of the religious principle on the temper and conduct of a nation. My evidence is no other than the historian himself: speaking of the English in the reign of king Charles I. ^s. “ Never was there
 “ a people less corrupted by vice, and more acted by
 “ principle, than the English, during that period:
 “ never did the nation possess more capacity, more
 “ courage, more public spirit, more disinterested
 “ zeal.” It is true, the elegant writer’s antipathy to Protestant fanaticism awakes in the next sentence, where he tells us ^t, “ The infusion of one ingredient
 “ in too large a proportion, had corrupted all these
 “ noble principles, and perverted them into the most
 “ virulent poison.” But instead of supporting this dreadful charge, he kindly supplies us with facts sufficient to invalidate it. “ To determine (says he)
 “ his choice in the approaching contests, every man
 “ hearkened with avidity to the reasons proposed on
 “ both sides.”—And in another place ^u, “ Fierce,
 “ however, and inflamed as were the dispositions of
 “ men, by a war both civil and religious, that great
 “ destroyer of humanity, all the events of this pe-
 “ riod

^s Hume’s hist. Vol. I. p. 330.

^t Ibid.

^u Ibid. p. 348.

"riod are less distinguished by atrocious deeds ei-
 "ther of treachery or of cruelty, than were ever
 "any intestine disorders which had so long a conti-
 "nuance: a circumstance which, if duly weighed,
 "will be found to imply great praise of the national
 "character of that people, now so unhappily roused
 "to arms." The enemies of religion must be im-
 moderately sceptical, if they question these facts af-
 ter the testimony of so penetrating an observer, and
 in a cause too, where every motive would have led
 him to be silent, had not the force of truth extorted
 the confession. It must then be allowed, that in an
 age, more celebrated for piety and devotion, than
 any succeeding period has been, a candid and impar-
 tial regard to evidence, and a gentle humane spirit,
 prevailed in the nation, when under circumstances
 which usually destroy these amiable virtues: a fact
 which, if duly weighed, will be found to imply great
 praise of that religious principle, which, in so unfa-
 vourable a season, could produce so abundantly such
 lovely fruits, and mitigate the ferocity of a nation,
 then so unhappily roused to arms. It might have
 been expected, that these fruits of Protestant fanati-
 cism would have procured it a milder censure ^v.

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^v After the uncommon freedom with which Mr. Hume has
 insulted the religion of his country, both in his essays and his-
 tory, I am struck with surprise at his encomium on Queen Eli-
 zabeth. *History*, page 8. "That renowned princess, whose
 "good taste gave her a sense of order and decorum, and whose
 "sound judgment taught her to abhor innovations, endeavoured
 "by a steady severity to curb this obstinate enthusiasm, which,
 "from the beginning, looked with an evil aspect both on the
 "church and monarchy. By an act of parliament in 1593, all
 "persons above the age of 16, who were absent from church a
 "month,

Old cavils may be repeated in a new dress. But after all, my brethren, religion will still appear to the fair and candid enquirer, the best and surest friend of social happiness. A virtuous education, a regard to character, or the sword of the magistrate, may restrain outward acts of wickedness : but the gospel of Christ, accompanied by the influence of his grace, does more ; it reforms the heart, and gradually weakens those evil inclinations, from which outward disorders flow. Other principles may produce occasional acts which look like virtue : but Christianity alone, can inspire men with an uniform love to their duty, and render them stedfast and immovable, always abounding in every good thought, word, and work.

But though it is of the greatest importance to animate all ranks of men with a spirit suited to their various stations, this is not the only way, in which righteousness exalteth a nation. The seeming tendencies

“ month, or who, by word or writing, declared their sentiments against the established religion, were to be imprisoned till they made an open declaration of their conformity.” Would it shew the sound judgment of our government, if it should curb the growth of infidelity by a like steady severity ? Does our author long to suffer persecution in the cause of scepticism ? or secure that our present rulers will not adopt these intolerant principles, does he intend them as a directory for more favourable times, when a religion may happen to be established, whose genius will admit of defending itself, and annoying its enemies, by calling in the aid of the secular power ? What account can be given of the manner in which our historian has varnished not only the superstitions, but the cruelties of the church of Rome ? or of what he says of Archbishop Laud, p. 200. “ He was in this respect happy, that all his enemies were also declared enemies to loyalty and true piety, and that every exercise of his revenge by that means became a merit and a virtue.”

dencies of things may be defeated, and Providence may so over-rule events, that their consequences may prove vastly different from their probable appearances. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor favour to men of skill, nor bread to men of understanding; but time and chance happen to all men ^w. The wisest know but in part, and have stumbled into the grossest solecisms. Politicians of the quickest foresight may yet be over-reached. The best state physicians may prescribe amiss, or apply improper remedies, and thus increase, rather than abate the diseases of a state. God can destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent ^x. He can cause their sagacity and penetration suddenly to forsake them, and that in circumstances, in which both themselves and the public have most occasion for them. Permit me therefore, though my subject does not lead me to consider it at large, to remind you of another way in which religion promotes the peace and prosperity of nations. It secures to us the favour and protection of that God, who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ^y. Here, wisdom, and riches, and honour, and strength, are of no avail. The LORD delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in those that hope in his mercy. He strengtheneth to his people the bars of their gates, he blesseth their children within them. He maketh peace in their borders, and filleth them with the finest of the wheat ^z. He can cause
their

^w Eccles. ix. 11.^x 1 Cor. i. 19.^y Dan. iv. 35.^z Psal. cxlvii. 10.—14.

their light to arise in obscurity, and their darkness to become as the noon-day ^a. If they lack wisdom, and ask of him, he gives unto them liberally, and upbraids not ^b. The wonderful Counsellor ^c leads them, when blind, in a way which they know not, and in paths which they have not known ^d. Through the strength of the Almighty, one of them has chased a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight ^e. Yea, when their ways please the Lord, he has sometimes made even their enemies to be at peace with them ^f.

Enough has been said on the tendency of religion to promote social happiness and national prosperity. And can we then view, without tender feelings of pain and distress, the ignorance and impiety of the greater part of our brethren of mankind? Is there the least spark of patriotism or benevolence in his breast, who prefers the low grovelling pleasures of sense to the heavenly delight of diffusing through the world, righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? Can genius, wealth, influence, example, be exerted in a more noble, or a more worthy cause, than when it is employed in promoting among men just sentiments, and pious dispositions; in correcting their manners, or reforming their lives? We were born, my brethren, not for ourselves, or our families alone: but for our friends, for our neighbours, for our country, for mankind. And he is unworthy of life, who lives only to himself.—But if generous motives move you not, if your narrow souls are utterly unaffected with the happiness or misery of others; at least, let me entreat you, for your own sakes, to seek the peace and welfare of your country and

^a Isa. lviii. 10. ^b James i. 5. ^c Isa. ix. 6. ^d Isa. xlii. 16.

^e Lev. xxvi. 8. Deut. xxxii. 30. Josh. xxiii. 10. ^f Prov. xvi. 7.

and her colonies, by promoting the knowledge and practice of religion, because in their peace and welfare you also shall have peace. None can plead an entire want of ability, or of opportunity, to lend a helping hand to this work. The poor may do much by their prayers and example. Masters of families may do much, by training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And as many of our neighbours' and acquaintances, both in high and in low life, are shamefully ignorant even of the first principles of the oracles of God, or stupidly inattentive to the weight and importance of those truths which they know; the lending, or giving to such men books calculated to instruct or to alarm them, might be a charity productive of extensive good ^g.

To propagate religion to places wholly destitute of Gospel light, is indeed a more difficult undertaking. Yet, even for this, sufficient funds might be raised, if every private Christian would contribute according as God has prospered him.

That all might have access thus to honour God with their substance, a society has been erected among us many years ago, for receiving such charities, and employing them to the best advantage. To propagate genuine Christianity, and promote loyalty and industry in those remote parts of Scotland, where multitudes are prepared, by false religion,

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^g Many worthy ministers and private Christians in London, of different denominations, deeply affected with the gross ignorance of multitudes in this land of Gospel light, formed themselves into a society, August 1750, for promoting religious knowledge among the poor, by distributing Bibles and other useful books. The printed accounts of their success have occasioned the erecting a society at Edinburgh on a like plan, 1st January 1756.

gion, ignorance, or idleness, to disturb the public peace, is their first and chief care. For this purpose, they have erected 170 schools, at which, as appears by the latest reports, no less than 6659 children are taught the principles of religion, and some of them also maintained at the charge of the society^h. How important a service this is to the public, I need not say. What success has, through the Divine blessing, attended the catechists and school-masters employed by the society in these parts, many of you in some measure know. What have been the happy effects of that success, in lengthening out our tranquillity, and in preventing the most dreadful national calamities, we cannot fully know, till the mystery of God is finished. Great things, it must be allowed, have been done for instructing and reforming the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, both by the society and by the managers of the generous annual bounty given by his Majesty for the same ends. Yet much remains undone, and must remain so, till further contributions enable the society to carry on so glorious a design. What blood and treasure might have been saved to the nation, had charities been timeously given, proportioned to that needful but arduous work? If, my brethren, we continue to with-hold more than is meet, it may tend to something worse than poverty. The men who, by the smiles of heaven on your charities, might have become the bulwark and defence of the nation, may prove the instruments of wresting from

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^h Besides these 170 schools, the society have two schools, one at Lochcatron, and another at Glenmoriston, for instructing children and others in husbandry and manufactures. *This was the state of the society at the time when this sermon was originally published.*

us our valuable liberties, civil and sacred, and of entailing popery and slavery on generations yet unborn.

But the society for propagating Christian knowledge have not confined their pious and charitable endeavours to our own country. They have extended them also to the Indians who border on our North American colonies. The success of their missionaries in those dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty, is a proof that glorious things might be expected from an increase of funds so wisely and usefully applied: applied, not to proselyte men to a party, not to maintain ministers in a country where faithful and able ministers already abound; but, applied to impart the Gospel to places hitherto ignorant of the way of salvation.

It is true, a concern for the interests of religion in foreign parts has been sneered at by our new British historian, as a low and odious bigotry, not to be justified by any maxims of sound politics¹. Had the historian viewed religion as an useless, but still as an harmless and innocent thing, the censure, though unjust, would have been in character. But that a man of compassion and humanity should feel himself unaffected, when a principle, which he apprehends to be malignant, diffuses itself through populous kingdoms, is a mystery of scepticism which my reason is yet too shallow to comprehend. The historian had, I believe, no thoughts of the natives of North America; his remark being occasioned by the sympathy of the English with their distressed Protestant brethren in Germany and in France. But as some of his sage admirers may possibly apply

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¹ See Mr. Hume's History, Vol. I. page 76, 77, 85, and 150.

it to attempts for Christianizing the Indians, I hope I may be permitted to ask whether it is low and odious bigotry, to wish for the happiness of all mankind, to grieve for their distresses, and if Providence shall give us opportunity, to contribute to their relief? If mutual charity, sympathy, and kindness are amiable in individuals, what should render them ugly or contemptible in the largest societies? Or, is it low bigotry to believe that the miseries of mankind would be lessened, if the humane gentle spirit of the Gospel prevailed among those savages, who can sport themselves with torturing a disarmed enemy; nay, who can butcher whole families in cold blood? Let me further enquire, would it be contrary to sound politics, to expend a few thousand pounds in proper endeavours to propagate genuine Christianity among the five Indian nations, and other numerous and powerful tribes, if this expence might save to the nation as many millions, in armies and navies, for protecting our colonies from their ambitious and treacherous neighbours? That this is the case, is more than probable. None who know the state of our North American colonies can be ignorant, that the French in Canada spare neither cost nor pains to gain over to their interest the neutral Indians, and to seduce even those Indians who are yet in alliance with us ¹. If these natives were once united with us in religious sentiments, this would do

¹ It will be remembered that this representation of the state of America was given in 1756.—See Mr. William Clarke's observations on the French encroachments upon the British colonies in North America, and on the importance of those colonies to Great Britain. Boston 1755. This judicious pamphlet is re-printed at London.

do much to attach them firmly to the British interest. An attempt to accomplish this, by employing a competent number of missionaries in those parts, by building towns for the Indians on the frontiers of our colonies, and by maintaining ministers and school-masters to instruct them, would, in all probability, be accepted with thankfulness by many of those Indians, and would convince them that our professions of friendship for them were sincere. And if we may judge from facts, towns of Christian natives would prove a strong barrier to our settlements, and in a great measure intimidate our enemies from encroaching upon them. Though therefore religious motives were out of the question, good policy would determine the true patriot to encourage every probable scheme for the conversion of the Indians.

Hitherto, I have solicited your charity, from a regard to the civil interests of the nation. But I hope I speak to many, who know and consider the value of an immortal soul, and who esteem Christ and his Gospel as the best of blessings. And can you behold multitudes of souls in imminent danger of eternal destruction, and not listen to the cry of their necessity? Seemeth it to you a great thing, to bestow a little of your superfluous wealth for that end for which the Son of God thought it not too much to bleed and to die? To rescue mankind from the bondage of sin and Satan is an undertaking truly generous and heroic: and it is impossible to do them any other service which can equal this. Brethren, if any do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from

from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins ^k. And can you refuse a charity, the joyful effects of which may be felt by your perishing brother through endless ages? Can you spend your money on the elegancies of life? Can you, without grudging, squander it away on vanities and trifles? And have you none to spare for the service of Him, who though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich? Dare you presume, to pray daily, that Christ's kingdom may come; while yet ye have no heart to exert yourselves in the smallest degree for the advancement of that kingdom? By pleading that God's name may be hallowed, do you mean to be excused from hallowing it yourselves; to be excused, from honouring God with your substance, and with the first fruits of your increase? Shall Jesuits compass sea and land, and spare neither money nor labour to proselyte men to idolatry and superstition; and shall the zeal, the activity, the liberality of those who profess the pure Gospel of Christ, fall short of theirs? If we are backward to impart to others the means of grace, may not God in righteous displeasure deprive us of them; or by withdrawing from them the influences of his Spirit, permit them to become to us a savour of death unto death?

The image of God was the glory of man in his primitive state: and a begun resemblance to the Son of God is the glory of the Christian. God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ^l. Is then indifference, whether others are eternally happy, or eternally miserable, any part of his image? Jesus came to seek and to save that which

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^k James v. 19. 20.

^l 1 Tim. iii. 4.

is lost? and are we fellow-workers with him, if we forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and them that are ready to be slain?

Tell me, ye who are now got to the upper world, did your application of a part of your substance for such kind and charitable purposes, darken your evidences for heaven, or fill you with terror or remorse, when walking through the valley and shadow of death? Or are you afraid lest it should prove to you a grief and offence of heart, in that important day, when they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever ^m? When Christ appears, will those have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, who, though they had fair opportunities, declined to do any thing for advancing his kingdom?

Art thou, my friend, rich and honourable? Thy riches and honour come from God. And does not gratitude, does not justice require, that of his own thou shouldst give him? To thee much has been given; and of thee therefore much shall be required. Death will ere long strip thee of every outward distinction, and summon thee to give an account of thy stewardship. He, who gave thee thy talents, will reckon with thee for every one of them ⁿ. And if thou shalt abuse them, or hide them in a napkin, will that prepare thee for giving in thy accounts with joy, and not with grief?

Hast thou no need of the blessing of God on thy estate and substance? Thinkest thou to obtain that blessing, by refusing to employ them for the purposes for which the Lord of all things granted them

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^m Dan. xii. 3.

ⁿ Matth. xxv. 19.

to thee? Or art thou afraid, lest if thou lendest unto God, it shall not be repaid thee again? Were this indeed the case, and hadst thou nothing more to expect from God, yet how base the ingratitude to refuse a little to Him, who has given thee all things richly to enjoy! But know, that here the calls of interest, and the calls of gratitude, are precisely the same. Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free °. If, under the Gospel, worldly prosperity is not so absolutely entailed upon goodness as it was under the Sinai-covenant; yet to those who improve their talents in the service and for the glory of God, so much even of worldly prosperity is secured as consists with their best and highest interest: and more than this would be a curse rather than a blessing. But if thou art not recompensed in this world, doubtless thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just ^p.—No part of your substance, my brethren, is laid out to such advantage, as that which you liberally contribute for charitable purposes. It is thus ye may make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, which, when ye fail, shall receive you into everlasting habitations ^q. It is thus ye may lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For though the heavenly reward is given, not for our righteousness, but for the merits of Christ; yet it is given in degrees proportionable to our good works. What ye now sow, ye shall reap in another world ^r. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly:

° Eph. vi. 8.

^p Luke xiv. 14.

^q Luke xvi. 9.

^r Gal. vi. 7.

sparingly : and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully ^s. The liberal soul shall then be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered himself ^t. Give, and it shall then be given, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Cast your bread upon the waters, and ye shall find it after many days ^u. And what you give, give freely and cheerfully, not grudgingly, and as of necessity ; for God loveth a cheerful giver.

^s 2 Cor. ix. 6.

^t Prov. xi. 25.

^u Eccles. xi. 1.

SERMON XVI.

THE EDUCATION OF POOR CHILDREN.

PSALM cxliv. 12. ^a

THAT OUR SONS MAY BE AS PLANTS GROWN UP IN THEIR YOUTH; THAT
OUR DAUGHTERS MAY BE AS CORNER-STONES, POLISHED AFTER THE
SIMILITUDE OF A PALACE.

THOUGH the goodness of God is the original source of every blessing; yet, in the ordinary course of things, blessings are not immediately and miraculously poured down from heaven; but are, through the seasonable friendly conveyance of one creature, transmitted to another. The Author of all things hath so framed, and doth so govern, the wide-extended universe, that every part of it, willingly or unwillingly, promotes that perfection and happiness of the whole, and in particular of the human species, which was destined for them in the Divine decree. Angels are all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation. The sun, that he may enlighten, and animate, and cheer, and adorn the earth, cometh forth as a bridegroom out of

^a Preached before the Managers of the Orphan Hospital, at Edinburgh, May 18, 1744; and published separately at that time.

of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race. With no less unwearied activity the other celestial bodies perform their stated revolutions, and contribute to the regularity, beauty, and harmony of the universe. If we descend to this lower region, there, even fire, hail, snow, vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil God's pleasure. Thus the general scheme of Providence, and the operations of animate and inanimate nature, strongly indicate man's obligation to obey the will of the Supreme Lord of all, and in his sphere to promote the great designs of the Divine wisdom and goodness. It is not enough that he cannot be charged with deliberately thwarting the end of his creation. If he is altogether inactive, and instead of rightly employing his talents, lives an indolent, dreaming, useless, unprofitable life, he is guilty of opposing the intentions of his Maker, and on that account liable to condemnation. Good works, works whereby God is glorified, and the happiness of mankind promoted, are absolutely necessary to justify a profession of piety to God, and of benevolence to man; and we may well apply here what our Lord says in another case; "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth ^b."

The acquisition or exercise of eminent skill in useful arts and sciences, undoubtedly deserves to be ranked among good works; yet too often men are prompted to this by no higher principles than ambition, covetousness, or the love of ease or pleasure. Scripture therefore lays no stress on this; but lays great stress on works of charity and beneficence, as evidences of true religion. "My little children

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" (saith

^b Matth. xii. 30.

“ (saith John ^c), let us not love in word, neither in
“ tongue, but in deed and in truth : and hereby we
“ know that we are of the truth, and shall assure
“ our hearts before him.” And a greater than John
represents the trial at the general judgment, as re-
specting the evidence which men have given of suit-
able regards to the Redeemer, or of the want of
such regards, by having relieved or neglected to
relieve those in distress ^d.

It is not, however, my present design to explain
and enforce the grace of charity, or that extensive
branch of it, compassion to the afflicted. I rather
chuse to recommend one particular species of mer-
cy, namely, the training up in such a manner the
children of the poor, in the knowledge and practice
of religion, and in useful industry, *That their sons
may be as plants grown up in their youth, and that their
daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the simi-
litude of a palace :* that their sons being early planted
by Divine grace in the house of the Lord, may
grow up to full maturity and strength in his courts;
and that their daughters, shining in their native
sweetness, and adorned with an humble, modest,
pious, meek, and quiet spirit, may exceed in beauty
and gracefulness those polished pillars which embel-
lish a royal palace.

Time will not allow me to delineate the manner
in which children must be trained up, if we would
have the comfort of this glorious and delightful
sight. It would greatly contribute to the ease and
interest of young persons, and to the peace and fe-
licity of all with whom they may stand connected,
were they early formed to habits of compassion and
humanity,

^c 1 John. iii. 18. 19.

^d Matth. xxv. 31.—46.

humanity, courteousness and civility, truth and integrity, diligence and application, of submission to those above them in years or authority, and of bearing with patience, that by which their humours are crossed, their desires resisted, or their unreasonable hopes disappointed.

Yet this care, however necessary, is by no means sufficient. Unenlightened reason hath taught these lessons; and men animated by no worthier motives than interest or honour, have in some measure practised them. These men are useful to society, from principles, which, had circumstances varied a little, would have led them to undermine it. An usefulness so precarious is not to be confided in. Constant and uniform goodness can only flow from real religion. Perhaps this is one reason why, in the 15th Psalm, the heirs of heaven are described, chiefly from their performance of social duties, and their freedom from the opposite vices: because, though in particular instances, there may be right conduct where there is no religion; yet God, who trieth the heart, and hath pleasure in uprightness, often brings men into circumstances, in which religion alone can prevent them from deviating from the paths of justice and charity.

Scripture every where represents right belief as necessary to produce such a religious temper. Without knowledge, the heart cannot be good; and if men are sanctified, it is through faith in Jesus Christ.

A belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, or, what is the same thing, a belief that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world, necessarily supposes a belief, that the world was in circum-

circumstances which rendered such a dispensation absolutely necessary for their recovery. The Gospel proclaims liberty to the captives. To men insensible of their bondage, that proclamation must seem an insult, not a favour. They only who know their misery, and their utter inability to help themselves out of it, will welcome the tidings, that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.

If therefore, through the blessing of God, we would promote in young persons that sense of their spiritual wants, without which Christ and his salvation will be viewed with indifference or contempt, let us endeavour to impress on their minds just sentiments of the being and perfections of God, and their relations to him as their Creator, Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor. Let us remind them, that this glorious God, to whom they are indebted for all they enjoy, demands a perfect and persevering obedience to his laws, sees their actions, hears their words, knows the very thoughts of their hearts, and, as he is now the witness of their temper and conduct, will ere long be their Judge. Let us appeal to their reason, if to love the Lord God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbours as ourselves, is not fit and becoming ; and if the law which enjoins this love, and a corresponding practice, is not holy, and just, and good. Let us appeal to their consciences, if they have not failed in yielding a complete obedience to these infinitely equitable precepts ; nay, if matters are not wretchedly amiss with them ; if they are not under the dominion of corrupt inclinations and appetites, which hurry them on to courses equally opposite to their duty and to their interest, even when they see
that

that their ruin in this and a future world must be the consequence; if their evil dispositions have not been already increased, and are not in danger of being still farther increased, by intercourse with others as bad as themselves; if they are not utterly unable to cure the moral diseases with which sin has infected their hearts; and if, by known, deliberate, presumptuous wickedness, they have not rendered themselves unworthy of God's pity and help. Let us ask them, if the God against whom they have rebelled, may not justly permit the evil spirits whose counsels they have followed, to lead them captive at their pleasure. Let us inculcate it upon them, that in God's favour is life; that those only are truly blessed whom he chuseth, and causeth to approach to himself; but that there is destruction to the wicked, and a sore and strange plague to the workers of iniquity; so that the stoutest-hearted among them shall find how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

Having thus opened the extensive demands of the law of God, and displayed its awful terrors; as we mean not to drive them to despair, we must also publish to them the glad tidings of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercies of our God. Tell them, ye who wish well to their precious souls, that God so loved a wretched and a worthless world, as to send his only-begotten Son, to be wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our transgressions; that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but might have everlasting life. Tell them, that the blood of God's Son cleanseth from all sin; that his merits have entitled thousands of the chief of sinners, and can entitle thousands more, to eternal

nal life ; and that his Spirit can take the stony heart out of our flesh, and put into us hearts of flesh ; that these inestimable blessings are freely offered to every hearer of the Gospel, and that none are excluded from a share in them, excepting those who by final impenitence and unbelief exclude themselves. Tell them that the Redeemer, in the days of his humiliation, discovered a peculiar tenderness of affection for little children, by laying his hands upon them, and blessing them, and saying, “ Suffer little children to come “ to me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the “ kingdom of heaven :” and that, to encourage those who devote to him the flower of their youth, and the vigour of their strength, he hath also said, “ I “ love them that love me ; and they that seek me “ early shall find me.” Solemnly warn them, that these words of salvation, which, when received with faith and love, are a savour of life unto life, will, if rejected or despised, prove a savour of death unto death.

Nor is it enough that we teach young persons the doctrines and duties of Christianity. As they are in danger, both from their companions, and from those farther advanced in life, of imbibing that instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge, we must also make them know the certainty of the things wherein they are instructed ; arguing with them, that a scheme so glorious as Christianity must needs have God for its author ; and that God hath borne witness to its divine original, by signs, and miracles, and divers mighty works, and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and especially by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

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If the rising generation rightly understood, and firmly believed the great truths of the Gospel, their faith would purify their hearts from inordinate affection to the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world, and inflame them with ardent love to their God and Redeemer; that love, by enlarging their hearts, would animate them to run with cheerfulness in the way of God's commandments; nay, constrain them to live to Him that died for them, and rose again. And thus the doctrines of our holy religion, when received, not as the word of man, but as they are in truth, the word of the living God, would powerfully excite them to cultivate and preserve a becoming behaviour in every character and relation of life.

The most transient reflection on these things may convince us, that no good man bestows a more useful and important charity than he who contributes to the Christian education of poor children. It may not, however, be improper, as the plainest truths are often overlooked, to represent to you some of the peculiar excellencies of this species of charity. And,

I. This charity tends to prevent misery, and therefore is more noble than that which only alleviates distress, or procures it a short and uncertain relief. Our relish for good, I readily acknowledge, is then most exquisite, when that good is obtained and enjoyed after we have long felt the opposite evil. Yet scarcely would any man purchase that increase of pleasure, by years of poverty and sickness, of torture of body, or of anguish of spirit. You account yourself more indebted to him who preserves you from adversity, than to him who, in misfortunes, which his seasonable compassion and care might have easi-

ly averted, affords you a scanty and imperfect supply; and he is justly esteemed to do another a greater kindness, and better to promote his interest, who endeavours to prevent his becoming wicked, than he who only attempts to reclaim him from a course of abandoned wickedness when actually engaged in it. That very principle which inclines us to pity and relieve the distressed, or to reform the vicious, will, if wisely directed, also incline us to wish and endeavour, that distress and wickedness may be prevented. He that doth good, as objects of distress happen to fall in his way, refreshes his own bowels, hearkens to the voice of humanity, and acts a truly amiable and worthy part: but he who, from a steady settled principle of piety and benevolence, is anxious to ward off the evils of every kind incident to man, and to contrive schemes for advancing and securing their happiness, exercises a more perfect charity, not extorted on the sight of misery by mere animal impulse, but flowing from a liberal soul devising liberal things. I might add, that the good done by such charity, though greater in itself, is often done with much less trouble and expence. It is far easier to put a young person in a way to feed and clothe himself, than to minister to the necessities of those whom idleness and debauchery have reduced to indigent circumstances. When the body is bowed down with disease, the spirit sunk with sorrow, or the heart hardened with the deceitfulness of sin, our charity may come too late, and, though kindly meant, may prove ineffectual. To educate the children of the poor is therefore an excellent charity. Many who must have groaned under pinching poverty, have eaten the bread of sorrow, and have drunk

water

the water of affliction, are thus put in a condition to secure a livelihood to themselves and their families; to enjoy the comforts of life; nay, to minister out of their abundance to the necessities of others: many whom vice might have brought to an infamous, untimely end, in consequence of such care, live beloved and honoured, and die lamented; and many who would have been held fast by the cords of their sin, and who would have died without instruction, become eminent and exemplary Christians, shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And this leads me to observe,

II. That the pious education of poor children is charity to the souls of men. By directing our bounty into this channel, those may become really religious, who would otherwise have grown up among us a lewd and profligate race, void of all knowledge and sense of duty. If he acts charitably, who, by feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, lengthens out for a little, a short, precarious, and wretched life; doth he not act still more so, who, by recovering a sinner from the error of his way, saves a soul from death, and covers a multitude of sins? If it is kindness to ransom from outward captivity, is it not superior kindness to contribute our endeavours, by a religious education, to turn sinners from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan to the living God? If giving a piece of bread, or a cup of cold water, we shall not lose our reward; what shall be the reward of those who supply perishing souls with spiritual food, and conduct them to Christ, the Fountain of living waters? The prophet Daniel hath told us, “They (says he^c)

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“that

^c Dan. xii. 13.

“ that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the
“ firmament, and they that turn many to righte-
“ ousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” Those,
we may reasonably conclude, shall shine brightest
in the firmament of glory, who in this lower
sphere did most resemble the Sun of righteous-
ness. In his temper and conduct, and in his on-
ly, compassion and love may be discerned in their
full perfection. These, it must be allowed, he glo-
riously displayed, in giving food to the hungry,
health to the sick, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame,
nay, life to the dead. Yet it was for other, and still
nobler purposes, that the Sun of righteousness arose
on a dark benighted world. He left the bosom of
the Father, he lived a life of sorrow, and at last sub-
mitted to a shameful and accursed death, that he
might bring in an everlasting righteousness, put
away sin by the sacrifice of himself, dispel the clouds
of ignorance and vice, destroy the works of the de-
vil, redeem from all iniquity, and purify to himself
a peculiar people, zealous of good works. His cha-
rity in all things has the pre-eminence: but no acts
of charity of which we are capable, so much resem-
ble his, and therefore none are so excellent, as those
whereby we promote the salvation of precious and
immortal souls. Do you then call yourselves Chri-
stians, and yet grudge a little expence in that cause,
for which God spared not his own Son, but delivered
him to the death? Are there amongst us multitudes
of young people, ready to perish for lack of know-
ledge, exposed an easy prey to the devil, the world,
and the flesh, and running on, insensible of danger,
in the broad way that leadeth to destruction; and
shall not your eyes pity, and your hands help? If you
are

are not blind, you must see them in imminent hazard of being sentenced to dwell with devouring flames and everlasting burnings. There is a possibility that your charitable endeavours may deliver them from so dreadful a doom, and can you deny them that charity? If their danger doth not move you, at least be moved by your own. Remember who he was that said, “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works ^f?”

III. The pious education of poor children, is a charity in which, of all others, there is the most probable prospect of doing good, and the smallest danger of misapplication. Objects of charity are many, and our relief cannot possibly reach them all: it is therefore our duty to order our alms with discretion, to bestow them chiefly on those who most need, and best deserve our help; and not to disable ourselves from relieving such, by misplacing our charity upon others, sufficiently able by honest labour to support themselves. Now these rules of prudence strongly recommend the charity of erecting and supporting schools for poor children. These little ones have no arts in begging, no dissembled tokens of misery to impose upon us, no affected clamours to overbear us: but, ah! how many disorders and diseases, natural and moral, are incident to their infirm and tender age! and to what various hazards are both
soul

^f Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

soul and body exposed through their own weakness and levity, and through the carelessness of others! Yet they feel not their worst disease; their greatest necessity they are utterly insensible of, and the dreadful dangers that hang over their heads alarm them not. They have no parents; or their parents are incapacitated by poverty or ignorance, to sow in their young hearts the good seed of the word: that soil, therefore, without the assistance of others, must remain barren, or be overspread with briars and thorns, which, through the blessing of God on due and timely culture, might have become fruitful in every good word and work.

As the danger of misapplying this charity is small, so the prospect of doing good by it is probable. It is in these days of their youth, that our endeavours to form them useful members of society, and sincere Christians, bid fairest to prosper. They brought into the world with them, it must be acknowledged, irregular appetites, and hearts disaffected to God and to goodness: but they have not as yet strengthened, by a long course of presumptuous sin, this their natural depravity, hardened their hearts from God's fear, or provoked his Spirit to cease to be a reprover to them. In their first and early years, it fares in some degree with their minds as it does with their bodies; they are more supple and pliant, and can with less difficulty be bended into any form: whereas in riper age they grow rigid and stiff, and preserve that shape and figure into which they were first moulded. Hence Solomon advises,
§ “Train up a child in the way he should go; and
“when he is old he will not depart from it.” Not
but

but that there have been, and will be, many exceptions from this general observation. Yet still there is no circumstance in life which has greater influence than education on men's sentiments and manners: and even when those well trained up, are overcome by the pollutions that are in the world, through lust, or satisfy themselves with an empty form of godliness, conscience often recoils, and the good principles imbibed in childhood, one time or other, pierce them with such anguish and contrition, as at length happily issue in repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. The recovery of those from the slavery of sin and Satan, who have grown old in ignorance and vice, is a much harder task: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard her spots? Then may they who are accustomed to do evil," and who want the knowledge which is the foundation of religious impressions, "learn to do well."

IV. Charity to poor children is of most extensive influence, in promoting the glory of God, the advancement of religion, and the temporal prosperity of a nation. It is indeed a noble charity, to support those in the decline of life, who are ready to sink under the double load of poverty and sickness; it is a still nobler charity to recover from the snare of the devil, the aged sinner, whose iniquities are multiplied more than his days, and whose steps at once hasten towards the grave, and towards eternal destruction: yet we cannot plead, that the general good of mankind is much promoted by such charities. They who are about to leave the world, have little ability or leisure to reform it. The young and gay regard their repentance as the effect of dotage;

or

or at best of necessity, not of a sincere and rational choice. It is otherwise when the youth are trained up in the good ways of God. The happy effects of this charity are not confined to the immediate objects of it. Through the blessing of God they often extend to their parents, their children, their friends, their neighbours, to the church and nation, and even to distant countries and future ages. Parents disabled by poverty to maintain and educate their children, are eased of that burden; nay, see a hopeful appearance that these children may prove to them what Obed was to Naomi, a restorer of their life, and a nourisher of their old age. Poor children having been accustomed by timely discipline to be tractable, and obedient to the advice and authority of their teachers; submission to rulers, who in the just constitutional exercise of their power, are ministers of God for good, and terrors only to evil-doers, becomes easy to them, and they are in little danger of disturbing the quiet either of church or of state: whereas they, whose obstinacy, self-will, rudeness, and pride, have been suffered to take root in youth, will be apt to prove uneasy under the gentlest yoke, and rebellious against the best of governments. Many who would otherwise have contracted habits of pilfering and cheating, or at least have sunk into a vagrant, loitering, inactive life, may be habituated to useful labour; and instead of pests or burdens, become eminent blessings to society, and greatly increase the national wealth, which chiefly flows from the number of hands employed in arts and manufactures. Families which otherwise would have pestered the public with swarms of noxious creatures, to prey upon its vitals, thus become nurseries of honest

nest industrious servants, diligent and skilful apprentices, and profitable members of the commonwealth. The errors and disorders of men in low life, greatly affect the public prosperity and peace. Now many of these errors flow from ignorance of religion; from the baneful influence of loose examples; from idleness, which strengthens every irregular appetite, and opens a wide door to every temptation; and from necessitous straitened circumstances, which often leave men little leisure, and less inclination, for minding the one thing needful; yea, suggest to them dishonest shifts for bettering their circumstances. Against these inundations of public confusion, charity-schools, when well regulated, are a considerable fence, by good instruction, by good discipline, and by accustoming young people to industry and application.

Nor is it only the temporal prosperity of a nation which this charity is calculated to advance; it tends also to promote the spread of genuine Christianity. Parents who have lived without God in the world, may be excited, by the blessing of God on the prayers, examples, and endeavours of their children, to join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten. When, by divine providence, these dear and promising youths enter upon public life, and intermingle in the business and conversation of the world; instead of corrupting others by an infectious example, by irreligious and dissolute principles, or by licentious and obscene discourse, it may be hoped, that their mouths shall speak wisdom, their tongues talk of understanding, and their hands be ready for every good work of industry and of charity. While

their light thus shines before men, others seeing their good works, will glorify their heavenly Father. Their amiable example will recommend the good ways of God to men who have hitherto been strangers or enemies to religion. One and another of them shall be accosted thus, perhaps by such from whom they would have expected it least: "I will go with you; for I have seen that God is with you. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And when that God who setteth the solitary in houses, shall make them families like a flock, the things that they have heard and known, and their teachers have told them, they will not hide from their children; that the generation to come may know them, even the children that shall be born; that they also may arise, and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget his works, but keep his commandments. Thus one generation shall praise God's works to another, and shall declare his mighty acts. The Redeemer's name shall endure for ever, and shall be continued as long as the sun; nay, the blessing shall extend to distant countries as well as to future ages. Considerations respecting the life that now is, or that which is to come, carrying the persons of some, and the influence of others, to foreign lands, shall carry with them the gospel of Christ, Thus men shall be blessed in Jesus, and all nations shall call him blessed. God, for the glory of his name, will sow his people in all corners of the earth, that he may pave the way for saying to them that were not his people, "Ye are my people;" and for their saying "Thou art my God."

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In the dark places of the east and of the west, of the south and of the north, now full of the habitations of cruelty ; religion, without enthusiasm or superstition, liberty without licentiousness, government without tyranny and oppression, shall find new abodes. Whatever hurts or defiles shall be more and more removed ; and the earth shall become full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Say not, that things so glorious cannot be hoped from the education of poor orphans : I flatter myself, that they may be hoped for, by means of the education of many of the dear youths now before me. Of what grace, or of what gift of the Spirit, does the obscurity of their birth, or the poverty or death of their parents, render them incapable ? Consult the history of past ages. Is there not often a wheel within a wheel, which, in an amazing manner, raises men of the meanest descent to the most eminent and important stations ? Or hearken to what the sacred oracles declare : “ God “ raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the “ needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him “ with princes, even with the princes of his people ^a.” God hath formerly chosen, and we know he can still chuse, “ the weak things of the world, “ to confound the things which are mighty ; and “ base things of the world, and things which are “ despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring “ to nought things that are ^b.”

These considerations abundantly justify the prudence of those worthy men, who having raised, by

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^a Psal cxiii. 7, 8.

^b 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

their own generous contributions, a fund for maintaining, cloathing, and instructing poor orphans, from all corners of the kingdom, were erected into a corporation for that purpose, A. D. 1742. Such has been the success of this benevolent institution, that many hundreds have been instructed in the principles of religion, reading, writing, arithmetic; and, in spinning, and such other employments as might best fit them for usefulness as tradesmen or household-servants. For twenty years past, there have been in the house from thirty-five to fifty children. The interest of their capital, and voluntary donations, enabled the corporation last August to encrease the number of orphans to sixty; and have since that time, enabled them to defray the expence of several alterations and improvements made on the Hospital. It is now more than time to hasten to a conclusion.

The salutary effects of hospitals and charity-schools must, in a great measure, depend on the wisdom and faithfulness of their directors, in improving their funds to the best advantage; on their caution in preferring, without partial regards, the most proper objects of charity; and on their care in intrusting their instruction to men of conscience and abilities. Permit me, therefore, to remind the managers of this hospital, that all their deliberations and decisions will be reviewed at a higher tribunal, and their most secret springs of action unveiled before an assembled world. If they have been unfaithful in the mammon of unrighteousness, who will commit to their trust the true riches^a? And if through their unfaithfulness multitudes

titudes are miserable in time or eternity, who might have been happy in both worlds, had they managed the concerns of the public with the same care with which they would have managed their own, can we suppose, that the blood of souls, souls whose salvation ought to have been precious in their sight, will not be required at their hands?

But as many who now bear an honourable part in the administration of public charity must soon resign to others that important trust, it concerns those who have the right of nominating their successors, if they would do justly and love mercy, and if they would not add to their own guilt, by being partakers of other mens sins, to chuse men fearing God, and hating covetousness; men who despise the gain of a prostituted conscience, will not be unduly biassed by solicitations, and who shake their hands from the holding of bribes: and however public virtue may be ridiculed, permit me to say, that experience hath shown us, and I hope will continue to show us, that such men may be found. Nor should modesty or indolence lead them to decline, what persons less qualified are too often eager to solicit. Perhaps there are few ways by which men who enjoy leisure and opulent fortunes, and are in easy circumstances of life, can do the world more substantial service, than by undertaking such trusts from benevolent and disinterested motives, and managing them with integrity and care. Such, therefore, if tempted to decline that burden, would do well to consider the doom of the servant who hid his talent in a napkin; and that to him who know-
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eth to do good, and who hath the opportunity of doing it, but doth it not, to him it is sin.

I shall now turn to the master and mistress employed in teaching the children in this Hospital. Let not so excellent and well-appointed a charity in any measure miscarry through your negligence or misbehaviour. The public expects, and God himself, to whom you must give an account, demands, that you should exert your best endeavours, by useful religious instruction, by a pious example, by necessary discipline, and by fervent prayers, that the youth intrusted to your care may become useful members of society, and sincere disciples of Christ. While your allowance from the public bears so small a proportion to that important and difficult work in which you are employed, your faithful services will find a nobler reward in the testimony of a good conscience, and sometimes too, in the pleasure of observing the seeds of knowledge, religion, and virtue, springing up under your culture, and promising a plenteous harvest: and though, in this respect, your labour should seem to be in vain, your work shall be with the Lord, and you shall receive a full recompence at the resurrection of the just. Be not therefore weary in well-doing, though your employment has peculiar temptations to weariness and discouragement: for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not.

I mean not, in what I have said, to trespass against justice and truth, by insinuating the least reflection on those intrusted with the government of this Hospital, or with the instruction and inspection of the orphans. There is however no impropriety

impropriety in warning men against evils which at present they hold in the utmost abhorrence, otherwise the meek and gracious Jesus would not have thus cautioned his disciples : “ Take heed to “ yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and “ cares of this life.”

Time allows me to say little to the dear orphans. Let your hearts burn with gratitude, and let your mouths be daily filled with the high praises of God, who put it into the heart of the founders and supporters of this institution to provide for your necessities, and to secure you an education in all respects so proper for you, that, by improving it aright, you may be happy both in time and through eternity. Pour out your prayers to God for the managers, and for the master and mistress of the Hospital, who have taken a care of you which your own parents, by poverty or by death, were disabled to take. Were it not for that care, you might have remained in the thickest Egyptian darkness, even in the midst of Goshen, and, though born in the pale of the visible church, have lived and died strangers to the saving truths of the gospel. **Q** consider, that these early instructions, which are now your happiness, will, if neglected, prove your misery, aggravate your guilt here, and increase your punishment hereafter ! Your case will be the worse for your present advantages ; and it would have been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after you had known it, to depart from the holy commandment. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation. May the blessing of the Lord

rest on every one of you ; and may many of you be honoured to be eminent blessings to the British nation, and to the church of God.

I shall now address myself to all who are capable, by their charitable contributions, of helping forward the good education of poor children. If you have no children of your own, your freedom from the charge of maintaining and providing for a family, seems to commit the children of the poor to your compassionate regards. Let it therefore be your delightful work, to resemble him who is a father to the fatherless, and the orphan's stay, and he will give you a name and a place better than that of sons and of daughters. If God has blessed you with children, natural affection to them should suggest to you thoughts of pity for destitute orphans, who want advantages for temporal and eternal happiness, which your children, and even many of the children of the poor, enjoy. Perhaps a little laid out for their relief may bring down a blessing on yourselves and your families : whereas the considerations which would shut up your bowels of mercy, and would tempt you to withhold more than is meet, may blast your best endeavours for your own off-spring.

And now, may the Lord strengthen the bars of Zion's gates, and bless her children within her ; may he make peace in her borders, and fill her with the finest of the wheat : may our sons be as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as polished stones carved after the similitude of a palace ; and may the Lord make all grace to abound towards us, that we always having sufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

PRAYERS FOR MEN IN PUBLIC OFFICES.

JOSHUA i. 17.^a

ONLY THE LORD THY GOD BE WITH THEE, AS HE WAS WITH MOSES.

PROMOTION cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the north, nor from the south; but God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. A statesman or a general dies, big with some grand and important plan, in the critical period, when his wise counsels or vigorous efforts were needed most. Moses, though earnestly desirous to conduct Israel to Canaan, is denied that honour, and sentenced to die on the other side Jordan. The promises, however, made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, must be accomplished. God appoints Joshua ruler of his people, and captain of his hosts, in the room of Moses. Whatever humble apprehensions Joshua might entertain of his inferiority to that great and good man, and of

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^a This sermon was preached before the election of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, Oct. 5th, 1779, and at their request was published separately at that time.

the difficulty of managing so rough a people ; yet, encouraged by God's gracious assurance of assisting and prospering him in his work, he accepts the government and military command, and with courage and cheerfulness enters on the business of these offices. The people accept him as their chief and head, whom God had chosen to go before them, and promise, as subjects and soldiers, to obey him as entirely as they had obeyed Moses. Nor could Joshua wish for more: for though the generation brought up in Egypt were rebellious, stubborn, and froward ; those whom he was called to govern, and whom Moses had trained up in the wilderness, were men of a truly excellent and worthy spirit. To engagements of fidelity and allegiance they added, as in our text, their pious prayers, that God, who had vouchsafed so much of his presence to Moses, would cause a double portion of his spirit to rest on his successor, and prosper him in his important work, that the beauty and strength of government might not be diminished by the change of the ruler: " Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses."

Such, my brethren, should be our wishes and prayers at all times for those who rule over us, or who command our fleets and armies, and more especially in such a day of danger and alarm as this.

It is the design of government to restrain men from injuring one another, and to defend them from the attacks of public enemies. Without government, our lives, and estates, and liberties, would soon become a prey to the covetous and cruel ; disorder and confusion, misery and distress, robbery

robbery and murder, would every where abound. The world would be as the troubled sea, whose waves continually cast forth mire and dirt; and the inhabitants of the world, as the fishes of the sea, the greater devouring the lesser. The most unhallowed lusts would be gratified, the most atrocious outrages and violences committed, and there would be no safety to him that goeth out, or to him that cometh in. It is therefore necessary, from the depravity of mankind, that some should be armed with power and authority, for preventing these evils, and for securing the peace and order of society. Laws must be enacted for preserving to men the undisturbed enjoyment of the blessings of nature and providence. Courts must be held for composing differences, determining claims, and redressing injuries. Magistrates must bear the sword, that they may be a terror to evil doers, and a shield and defence to them who are quiet in the land.

Among the rights secured to us in these lands by government, one of the most valuable is, the right of worshipping God, according to the dictates of conscience, and the rules of his word. Paul exhorted the primitive Christians to pray for kings and all in authority, that under them they might lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. If it was a duty to pray for heathen magistrates, though enemies of the Christian faith, that they might not persecute and oppress it, and even that they might be converted to it; there is greater cause to pray for the preservation of that happy constitution, and just government, which secures to us the free and undisturbed exercise of our religion.

Rulers who answer the end of their office as
D d d 2 guardians

guardians of civil and religious liberty, are pillars of a land. They uphold and support it, and keep it from tottering and sinking. That our rulers, supreme and subordinate, and that the leaders of our fleets and armies, may, by possessing such characters, prove the pillars of our land, we should pray for them,

1. That they may be endued with every grace and virtue which can animate to the faithful and diligent execution of the duties of their office. When those in places of trust, civil or military, fear God and hate covetousness, seek the wealth of their people, delight in the abundance of their prosperity and peace; when they are warmly affected to the interests of religion and of their native land, prefer these to their chiefest outward joy, willingly spend and are spent, spare no pains, decline no danger, and chearfully devote their time, talents, and influence, for promoting these interests; such men become the chariots and horsemen of Israel, her ornament and beauty, her glory and defence. A ruler who sincerely loves his God and Saviour, will learn from his Saviour, to love his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, and to rejoice in the opportunities which his station affords him of contributing to their safety and happiness. Like the King of saints, he is meek and lowly, gentle and condescending, kind and compassionate. He takes heed what he doth, seeing he rules and judges, not for man, but for the Lord, who is with him in the judgement. While others do their work slightly and negligently, whatever his hand findeth to do, he doth it with all his might; for he remembers, that, though
man

man may perhaps never call him to an account, God certainly will. Though moderate in his own cause, he is resolute and zealous in the cause of God, and of the community. The charge given to Joshua ^a, he considers as binding upon him: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." Conscious of the difficulty of his office, and of the danger of hurting the cause which he wishes to support, he addresses the Father of lights, as Solomon addressed him ^b: "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." He will not, by hearkening to the impulse of pride, or ambition, or resentment, involve himself and his subjects in needless hazard. He leans not to his own understanding, but in all his ways acknowledges God, that God may direct his steps. He remembers on what terms the divine presence was promised to Joshua ^c: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

If piety, true patriotism, and zeal for the interests of religion, are at present less conspicuous in many who hold civil or military offices, than they have been in some former periods, there is the greater need to beseech him, with whom is the residue

^a Josh. i. 7.^b 1 Kings iii. 9.^c Josh. i. 8.

sidue of the Spirit, to pour it out abundantly. And it should encourage us thus to intercede, that God will have men of all ranks and stations to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2. We should pray, that all in offices, civil or military, may be endued with the gifts and talents necessary for the honourable discharge of their several offices. Capacity and genius, as well as good dispositions, are requisite for serving the public. Rulers and judges must not only put on righteousness to clothe them, but their judgement must be as a robe and a diadem^d. It is not enough that they are honest, upright, impartial, incapable of being biassed by interest, friendship, or resentment: they also need a sound judgement, thorough knowledge of the law of God and of the laws of their country, and sagacity in discovering the truth, however disguised by the subtilty of the orator or politician, or by the unfaithfulness of witnesses. A warm heart, and an honest indignation against vice, must be accompanied with a cool head and a calm temper, lest the judge or the statesman should be surprised by appearances, and false representations, to condemn the guiltless, or to engage in schemes which may issue in disappointment and ruin. The means of promoting public prosperity; the evils by which it is often gradually undermined; the influence of national opinions, taste, and manners; the art of directing or curbing that influence; and the capacity of perceiving from the events and the character of the times, how a nation may be best extricated from dangerous and perplexed circumstances: these are matters of deep investigation,

^d Job xxix. 14.

tigation, and which lie out of the sight and reach of an ordinary genius. The ambitious designs of neighbouring kingdoms, or the treacherous conspiracies of subjects are often artfully disguised. In these cases, counsel in the heart of man is like deep water: but a man of understanding will draw it out ^e; and will find means in proper time to discover and to disappoint those hidden works of darkness and dishonesty. When such distinguished abilities adorn those in superior stations, they are as a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. They who sit under their shadow, acknowledge and revere, and are often even in danger of idolizing them. Wisdom maketh a man's face to shine ^f, and commands deference and respect. Mordecai owed it to the eminence of his talents, as well as of his virtues, that he was great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren ^g. Confidence in leaders, naturally produces submission to their authority, and vigour and fortitude in executing their plans. Wisely therefore did Jethro counsel Moses, to provide out of all the people able men, and to make them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens: And Moses wisely hearkened to his voice, and chose able men out of all Israel ^h. Now every good gift, for the arts sciences, and ordinary business of life, and much more for government, cometh from above, from the Father of lights. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them ⁱ. It is from divine influence that rulers diligently search what conduct is just and wise; hearken to salutary advice, from whatever quarter it

^e Prov. xx. 5.^f Eccles. viii. 1.^g Esther x. 3.^h Exod. xviii. 21, 24, 25.ⁱ Prov. xx. 21.

it comes; and have clear understandings to discern, and sound judgements to chuse the right path, even in situations the most intricate and perplexed. When therefore God immediately appointed rulers to his ancient people, they were either men of eminent talents, as Moses and Joshua; or else, after their appointment, were miraculously endowed with a spirit for government. Thus when God appointed seventy men of the elders of Israel to bear the burden of the people with Moses, he took of the spirit which was upon him, and put it upon them¹: not by diminishing the talents of Moses, but by bestowing like talents upon those who were to assist him in his work. God's setting over Israel so wise a prince as Solomon, was viewed by the Queen of Sheba as an evidence of his peculiar love to that nation.^k “Happy
 “are thy men, and happy are these they ser-
 “vants, which stand continually before thee,
 “and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord
 “thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee
 “on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy
 “God: because thy God loved Israel, therefore
 “made he thee king over them, to do judge-
 “ment and justice.” On the other hand, God often hastens the destruction of a state; by a general want of such talents: and confidence in rulers ceasing, riot, disorder, and sedition then prevail. Hence the threatening to Judah¹: “For
 “behold, the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, doth
 “take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah,
 “---the mighty man, and the man of war, the
 “judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and
 “the

¹ Num. xx. 17.^k 2 Chron. ix. 7, 8.¹ Isa. iii. 1, 5.

“ the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honour-
 “ able man, and the counsellor.” (Men shall have
 the names and emoluments of these offices, without
 qualifications for discharging the duties of them).
 “ And I will give children to be their princes, and
 “ babes shall rule over them ;” (i. e. men of weak,
 childish, trifling spirits.) “ And the people shall
 “ be oppressed, every one by his neighbour ; the
 “ child shall behave himself proudly against the
 “ ancient, and the base against the honourable.”
 Of the same nature are the threatenings against
 Egypt^m: “ The spirit of Egypt shall fail in the
 “ midst thereof: and I will destroy the counsel
 “ thereof. Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the
 “ counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is be-
 “ come brutish. The princes of Zoan are become
 “ fools, the princes of Noph are deceived, they
 “ have also seduced Egypt, even they, that are the
 “ stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath ming-
 “ led a perverse spirit, in the midst thereof; and
 “ they have caused Egypt to err in every work
 “ thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vo-
 “ mit. In that day shall Egypt be like unto wo-
 “ men.”

3. We should pray, that, in consequence of good
 dispositions and eminent abilities, rulers may ac-
 tually adopt the measures which best tend to pro-
 mote the public good. It is not enough that a
 ruler avoids, in his own practice, whatever may em-
 bolden wickedness, and recommends, by an exem-
 plary conduct, that righteousness which exalteth a
 nation. He must vigorously enforce and execute
 the laws already established for restraining wrong,

† E e e

and

and wicked lewdness, and help forward the enacting of such new laws as may be needful for restraining them more effectually. Merit should ever gain his favour ; every design of public utility should procure his countenance and encouragement ; and his frown should check and curb the licentious and profligate. Hezekiah spake comfortably to the Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lordⁿ. David resolved^o, “ I will not know a wicked person. “ Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will “ I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud “ heart, will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon “ the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with “ me : he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall “ serve me. He that worketh deceit, shall not “ dwell within my house ; he that telleth lies, shall “ not tarry in my sight.” Unhappily in one important instance he forgot these resolutions, took up an ill report against the virtuous and loyal Mephibosheth, lent his ear to the base slanders of the crafty Ziba, and heaped favours on that treacherous wretch, at the expence of his innocent master, the son of the man who had risked his life for David, and who loved him as his own soul. His great abilities, and honest intentions, were, on this occasion, talents wrapped up in a napkin, from which virtue derived not the protection which it merited. If rulers stir not up the graces and gifts which are in them, they become to the ruled as the idols of the Heathen to their worshippers. They have eyes, but see not the faults of their favourites ; ears, but mistake the voice of flattery for that of friendship ; mouths, but speak not with mildness and temper, with

ⁿ 2 Chron. xxx. 22.

^o Psal. ci. 4—7.

with resolution and steadiness; and hands, but revenge not the wrongs done by the betrayers of the public interest. Unjust prejudices against one set of men, and ill-judged attachments to another, often prevent men in power from doing much good, which they could and would have done, had not God suffered them to be thus blinded, in punishment of a wicked people.

The God of heaven is often pleased to confound the wisest counsels, and to defeat the greatest strength. He infatuates the judgements of men, that they cannot discern the proper measures for accomplishing their designs. Ahithophel, whose counsel in those days was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God, gave an advice to Absalom for setting himself on the throne, well adapted to Absalom's situation, and built on profound political knowledge. Hushai gave an opposite advice, recommended by the courtly arts of flattery and disguise, but really meant to delude and ruin Absalom. Nevertheless Absalom, and all the men of Israel, said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite
" is better than the counsel of Ahithophel: for the
" Lord (by thus blinding their judgements) had ap-
" pointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel,
" to the intent that the Lord might bring evil up-
" on Absalom." Rehoboam rejected the wise and moderate plan of government recommended to him by the venerable men who had been his father's counsellors; and adopted the rash measures suggested to him by raw and inexperienced youths. Instead of redressing the grievances complained of by the people, he answered their deputies roughly,

E e e 2

and

and thus provoked ten tribes to revolt from the house of Judah: "The cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which he spake by Ahijah unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat ^s."

The best of rulers seldom do all that they might have done for discouraging idleness, luxury and dissipation, and for punishing gross acts of profaneness, intemperance, and impurity. The brightest parts, and the most upright intentions do not prevent them from being sometimes betrayed into plans greatly prejudicial to themselves, and to their subjects. The rashness of good Josiah in going to fight with Pharaoh Necho in the valley of Megiddo is an instance of this. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will ^t. God, in ways which we cannot fathom, excites, directs, or over-rules their inclinations, counsels, and resolutions, in order to accomplish by them the purposes of his mercy, or of his wrath. For the destruction of a guilty nation, he pours out on those at the helm, or on those who conduct military operations, a spirit of slumber, giving them eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear ^u. The wisdom of the wise shall perish, the understanding of the prudent shall be hid ^x. This is the true reason, why conduct is often so opposite to what might have been expected from real character; and why wise and worthy men adopt and persist in schemes which understandings less cultivated perceive to be absurd, and at which consciences

^s 2 Kings xi. 15.

^u Rom. xi. 8.

^t Prov. xxi. 1.

^x Isa. xxix. 14.

sciences less tender are shocked as impious or unjust. With God is strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth away counsellors spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He removeth the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness wherein there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man^y. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night^z." Pride may teach us another and a deceitful doctrine: but the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps^a. What man fondly imagines to be a path of safety and happiness, is often the high road to danger and woe. Ah! that from a deep and habitual sense of this, we were humbly looking up to the Sovereign of the universe, that, in unmerited mercy to our guilty land, he would teach our statesmen, and those intrusted by them with the care of defending us, to profit by the counsels of Wisdom, and in this dangerous crisis lead them by the way that they should go^b.

4. We should pray God, to prosper the endeavours of all in civil and military offices, for promoting the public good. Rulers, though adorned with every gift and grace, have no power to serve the public

^y Job xiii. 16, 17, 20, 21, 24, 25.

^a Jer. x. 23.

^z Job v. 13, 14.

^b Isa. xlviii. 17.

public, and weak and wicked rulers have no power to hurt it, except it is given them from above ^c. They are ministers of God ^d, and their services are in kind, degree, and continuance, just what God, whose ministers they are, sees meet. The envy and malice, the slanders and reproach, the unmanageable spirit and fierce opposition of the sons of Belial, often prove too strong for the best-intentioned and ablest princes. The power, cunning, and extensive influence of the sons of Zeruiah, obliged the man according to God's own heart, to connive at many evils, which he would have willingly redressed. The high places, where superstition worshipped, were not taken away in the days of good King Jehoshaphat, because God had not prepared the hearts of the people to the God of their fathers ^e. When inferior magistrates discover becoming zeal in a good cause, it often happens that their laudable attempts have no other effect than to bring on themselves personal injuries, indignities and abuse. One arrogantly tells them, "Ye take too much upon you ^f." Another scornfully asks, "By what authority dost thou these things ^g?" The ambitious and aspiring, and they who delight in murmurings and complaints, accuse them of crimes of which they know them to be innocent, and paint in the blackest colours their most virtuous deeds. It is under God a chief security of our other liberties, that we in these lands enjoy the liberty of canvassing, and even arraigning, the measures of administration. While ministers of state are men of like infirmities with others, there will

^c John xix. 11.^f Numb. xvi. 3.^d Rom. xiii. 4.^g Matth. xxi. 23.^e 2 Chron. xx. 33.

will be frequent occasion for the exercise of this privilege; and when it is exercised by a free and candid discussion of political questions, though many may err, useful knowledge will be increased. But as the best things may be perverted, this important privilege hath been often abused, to gratify spleen or disappointed ambition, to varnish over the worst measures, to discredit the best, and to bring contempt or hatred on characters, which, from their intrinsic merit, and high rank, the laws of God, the welfare of society, and even good manners, demand, that we should honour and respect. Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation ^d. But presumptuous, self-willed men, who have no pretensions to the holiness, or to the dignity of angels, despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities ^e. Men, when hardly bestead and hungry, fret themselves, curse their king and their God, and look upwards ^f. The insolent treatment of our sovereign in some publications *, can hardly be accounted for on other principles: for personal invective doth no honour to any cause; and though it may please the bigots of a party, hath no tendency to make proselytes. When the measures of administration prove unsuccessful, many are averse to share in the blame, and would devolve it entirely on those at the helm, who a few years before expressed their approbation of those very measures by their silence, or perhaps even by public addresses in favour of them. Every one throws upon another the blame of national misfortunes.

Ministers

^d Jude 9.

^e 2 Pet. ii. 10, 11.

^f Isa. viii. 21.

* Junius's letters, North Briton, &c.

Ministers of state and military commanders mutually accuse one another. Not a few accuse both. No one saith, "What have I done? Have not my iniquities largely contributed to involve my country in danger and distress?"

It must be allowed, that the characters of the great usually influence their conduct, and that their conduct determines the fate of communities. Yet often events happen entirely opposite to these probabilities. By a concurrence of unhappy circumstances, a kingdom is divided against itself, and brought to desolation ^k. In one period unjust suspicions of rulers are fomented; in another groundless jealousies are entertained of the best friends of religion and civil liberty, and their actions are invidiously ascribed to ends, the very reverse of their native tendency. It was a part of the burden of Egypt, that God set the Egyptians against the Egyptians, every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom ^l. He, and he only, who stilleth the waves of the sea, can still these tumults of the people ^m. Even when a nation is united, when schemes for securing public tranquillity and repelling the inroads of enemies are well laid, and when neither strength and numbers, nor men of courage and conduct are wanting to execute them, still, "except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen watch in vain ⁿ." "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding,

^k Matth. xii. 25.

^l Isa. xix. 1.

^m Psal. lxxv. 7.

ⁿ Psal. cxxvii. 1.

“standing, nor favour to men of skill, but time and
 “chance happeneth to all men^g.” If that God by
 whom king’s reign, and princes decree justice, be-
 friend a ruler, no weapon formed against him shall
 prosper. No man was able to stand before Joshua,
 because the prayer in our text was granted, and the
 Lord his God fought for him^h. David maintained
 the possession of his crown, notwithstanding the
 formidable confederacies of his enemies, because
 God girded him with strength unto battle, and sub-
 dued under him those that rose up against himⁱ.
 Mountains were made plains before Zerobabel, not
 by might, or by power, but by the spirit of the
 Lord of hosts^j. But if God be against us, who can
 defend us? An unseen interposition of Providence
 often checks and counteracts the seemingly neces-
 sary operations of means. An army, numerous,
 brave, and well appointed in every thing that
 seemed necessary to ensure success, yet gains no
 advantage over a despised and feeble foe. The
 valiant are seized with a sudden and unaccountable
 panic, so that one shall chase a thousand, and ten
 put ten thousand to flight. One commander hates
 and envies another, and rather than contribute to
 advance his reputation, forfeits his own. Imagined
 injuries and affronts, perhaps incidents the most
 trifling, raise a perverse and contentious spirit be-
 tween different corps, and their strength and cou-
 rage are wasted in destroying themselves, which, if
 properly exerted, might have vanquished the com-
 mon enemy. Fire, hail, vapour, and stormy wind,
 fulfil God’s will^k, and by fighting against an army,

† F f f

as

^g Eccl. ix. 11.^h Josh. xxiii. 9, 10.ⁱ Psal. xviii. 39.^j Zech. iv. 6, 7.^k Psal. cxlviii. 8.

as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera ^l, cause a defeat, where a victory seemed certain. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy ^m. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not ⁿ? They therefore, who wrestle, and make supplication, and as princes have power with God, bid fairest with men also to prevail ^o.

If ever a season demanded fervent prayer for our rulers and commanders, surely the present demands it, when we are in danger of being deprived of the inestimable blessings we have enjoyed under the illustrious house of Hanover. For this purpose powerful monarchs are setting themselves, and taking counsel together. Unhappily we were not convinced of their hostile designs, till we had let slip the easiest and surest opportunity for guarding against and disappointing them. Men who paid small regard to their declared friendly intentions from any confidence in their good faith, flattered themselves, that they would not take part against us, from jealousy of hazard to their own colonies, if our colonies should become independent. It was not attended to, that Britain, when opposed by North-America, must be less formidable to the house of Bourbon, than she had been when North-America fought under her banners: and that if Britain was subdued, the subduing her colonies would

^l Judges v. 20.

ⁿ Lam. iii. 37.

^m Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17, 18.

^o Gen. xxxii. 28.

would become more easy ; as the united arms of Britain, France, and Spain, might effect, when the colonies were weakened, what the arms of Britain alone had not effected when they were in full strength. This consideration renders it of the last importance, not to Britain only, but to North-America, and to every Protestant state in Europe, that the designs of France and Spain should be disappointed. The conquest of Britain would soon be succeeded by that of North-America, and that again by the conquest of Holland, of the Protestant states of Germany, and of the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, if not by the subjugation of every other state in Europe. But I forget that I am not addressing our colonies or foreign states : it is our own hazard only which my subject leads me to consider.

Some from a mean, selfish, or dastardly spirit, are unconcerned for the fate of their king, their country, and their religion ; and are unwilling, in defence of them, to risk their persons, or even to part with their money. If they can keep themselves safe, they regard not what religion is uppermost, what laws are enacted or abrogated, and who gains or loses a crown. Others even wish for the establishment of arbitrary power, in hopes that this would soon pave the way for the return of Popery. Some who are themselves sincere Protestants, and warmly attached to civil liberty, have unwarily damped the zeal of others, by asserting, that the spirit of Popery is now become gentle and tolerant ; and that it is not the temper of the present times to persecute for religion. As riches are the sinews of war, many flatter themselves, from the multitude

of our ships which have reached the places of their destination in safety, and the many valuable ships which have been taken from our enemies, that Britain has hitherto been more successful than the powers combined against her: though perhaps it were a juster conclusion, that these powers, when possessed of so formidable fleets, would not permit such strokes on their commerce, were they not meditating some grand design, from which they hoped to obtain ample compensation for these losses. The preparations of our enemies alarm even the profligate, and our sins the pious. Perhaps the dates of some events merit attention. Had the dispute with the colonies commenced much earlier, consciousness of their weakness would have prevented their revolt. Had it commenced much later, Britain, sensible of their strength, would have given them no pretext for it. Unhappily it commenced in an intermediate period, when a breach so pregnant with woe to both countries appeared safe to both. Dread of our common enemies would probably have restored our ancient friendship, and even fixed it on a firmer basis, had France or Spain gone to war with us in the first stages of that dispute. But they artfully delayed interposing, till the strength of the contending parties was greatly diminished, and their animosity and rancour inflamed; that thus their interposition might be of small and transitory service to North-America, and to Britain of great and durable hurt. “Be-
“ cause to every purpose there is time and judge-
“ ment, therefore the misery of man is great upon
“ him.---For man also knoweth not his time: as
“ the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as
“ the

“ the birds that are caught in the snare ; so are
“ the sons of men snared in an evil time, when
“ it falleth suddenly upon them ^p.” On the other
hand, some who once derided all danger from our
Popish foes, are now ready to despair of our being
able effectually to resist their ambitious designs.
But let not cowardice and despondency complete
the destruction which presumption has begun.
Brasides, a brave Spartan general, being bit by
a mouse which he had seized, took occasion from
this incident to remark, that the most contempti-
ble creature may be safe, if he has courage to de-
fend himself. What we have at stake, is too valu-
able to be parted with tamely, and without resist-
ance. The issue of the struggle may prove differ-
ent from what our guilt and the strength of our
enemies threaten. If we would seek to the Lord,
and make our supplication to the Almighty ; if we
would sincerely renounce the sins which have pro-
voked his displeasure against us ; who knoweth,
but God might yet awake for us, and make our ha-
bitations safe and prosperous ? Compare, my bre-
thren, what our situation now is, with what it pro-
bably would be if our enemies prevailed. Do you
prefer domestic quiet and happiness to constant al-
arms for yourselves, your families, and friends ;
liberty to slavery ; the privilege of being judged by
law, tried by your peers, and taxed by representa-
tives of your own choice, to holding fortune and
life at the pleasure of a haughty conqueror ; and
legal security for the rights of private judgement,
to depending for their preservation on the genero-
sity of an absolute monarch ? Do you prefer the

Bible

Bible to the Mass-book ; a pure and rational devotion to idolatry and superstition ; and Protestant teachers, who recommend religion by the soft and gentle methods of argument and persuasion, to Jesuits and Dominicans, whose compassion to souls hath often appeared in treasons and assassinations, persecutions and massacres, and all the horrors of the inquisition ? Do you prefer the right of examining doctrines by reason and scripture, to blind submission to a pretended infallible guide ; and a religion, which cements the union of princes and people, and enforces the observance of their reciprocal duties, to a religion which absolves subjects from oaths of allegiance to their lawful princes, and obliges princes to destroy subjects whom they have sworn to defend ? Would we avoid the dreadful alternative of incurring the wrath of God, by worshipping consecrated wafers, and saints and angels, and pictures and images, and bones, or of suffering the vengeance of man by refusing thus to worship ? Let then your fervent prayers ascend to the Father of mercies. Say, “ Lord, spare thy
“ people, give not up thine heritage to reproach,
“ that their idolatrous enemies should rule over
“ them. Be for a spirit of counsel to them who sit
“ in counsel, and for strength to them who turn
“ the battle from the gate. Let us not see a fierce
“ people, a people of a strange speech, that we
“ cannot perceive. May Zion be a quiet habi-
“ tation and tabernacle, that shall not be taken
“ down, not one of the stakes thereof removed,
“ nor one of the cords thereof broken ! May the
“ glorious Lord be to us as a place of broad rivers
“ and streams, whereon shall come no hostile ship
“ or

“ or galley with oars ! Strengthen, O Lord ! that
“ which thou hast wrought for us. Rebuke the
“ company of spearmen. Scatter the people that
“ delight in war. Send thine hand from above,
“ rid us and deliver us out of great waters, from
“ the hands of strange children, whose mouth
“ speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right
“ hand of falsehood ; that there be henceforth no
“ breaking in or going out, and that there be
“ no complaining in our streets.”

Let these prayers be accompanied with praise and thanksgiving to him whose kingdom ruleth over all, for the peace and happiness which these lands have enjoyed since the Revolution. Let us ever respect and maintain the Revolution principles, to which, under God, we are indebted for these blessings, and the memory of the patriots and heroes who procured or defended them. Nor let us, in this city, forget what we owe to a series of magistrates, who have watched over our tranquillity, as, on other accounts, so for their regard to merit, to the voice of the public, and to the inclinations of their fellow-citizens, in supplying vacancies in schools, in the university, and in our churches.

Let us present these prayers and praises with the humility and self-abasement which become our meanness as creatures, and our vileness and guilt as sinners ; and yet with the confidence of those who, in the prevailing name of Jesus, are allowed to come boldly to a throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy to pardon, and find grace to help in every time of need.

If by our prayers we wish to procure these blessings, let us beware of a conduct that may provoke
God

God to shut out our prayers from him, and to withhold his blessing from us. With the pure God will show himself pure, and with the froward froward ^a. If we have fasted and afflicted ourselves, and God taketh no knowledge, it becomes us to inquire, whether our fasts have had the scripture-characters of the fast that God hath chosen ^r; or whether some iniquity held fast, and not let go, does not keep back good from us. Let every one consult his conscience what hath been his conduct, and consult his Bible what it should now be.

Let such as are called to subjection, not to government, render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour ^s. Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king ^t. Study to be quiet, and to do your own business ^u. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men ^x. Let not your hearts be haughty, nor your eyes lofty, neither exercise yourselves in great matters, or in things too high for you ^v. Judge not causes which you have no call to judge, and no ability or opportunity to examine. Always suspect men who are bold in deciding, severe in reproaching, but sparing of evidence; and who, when they cannot fairly answer the reasonings of those from whom they differ, give injurious representations of their sentiments and conduct. Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God ^z. Faint not in this day of public danger, but be of good courage and play the men for our people, and for the cities
of

^a Psal. xviii. 26.^t 1 Pet. ii. 17.^r Psal. cxxxi. 1.^r Isa. lviii. 3—14.^u 1 Thess. iv. 11.^z Micah vi. 8.^s Rom. xiii. 7.^x Rom. xii. 18.

of our God ^a. If your prayers and struggles cannot ward off temporal judgements, remember, that by a penitent flight to the Saviour, you may prevent greater evils, and ensure greater blessings, than this world can threaten or promise.

Let all of us cultivate and improve the various talents with which God hath endued us, and carefully perform our respective duties, whether as rulers or subjects. Soon will our present opportunities of glorifying God, and of serving our brethren of mankind, come to a period. Our breath goeth forth, we return to our dust, and in that day our thoughts perish ^b. The wise, and great, and good, often die in full strength and vigour, and when their usefulness is greatest: how much then doth it concern us, to fill up every portion of our short and uncertain lives with vigorous endeavours to do good, and to finish every work allotted us by our heavenly Father!

2 Sam. x. 12.

Psal. cxlvi. 4.

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SERMON

SERMON XVIII.



THE SOURCES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANARCHY.



ISAIAH xxiv. 1—5.*

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.—And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.—The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.—The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.—The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

I DOUBT not, some will think it strange or improper, that I should select a text from this chapter. If the fault is not our own, do we not lead quiet and

* This Sermon was preached before the Magistrates of Edinburgh, September 2. 1792, and was soon after published separately. The following Preface was then prefixed to it.

“ Though I thought it my duty in May and June, 1792, to

and peaceable lives, and may we not spend them in all godliness and honesty? Has not the seditious spirit, which appeared in some places three months ago, well nigh subsided, so that none feel, and few dread, the evils of anarchy?---All this I readily allow. Yet, are not these evils severely felt in a neighbouring state? Ought we not to take warning from their situation? Is it impossible that the secret operation of similar causes should produce similar effects?

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give public warning against the seditious spirit, which then appeared here, and in some other parts of Scotland; it seemed to spread so little, and so quickly to subside, that I would not have composed or preached the following Sermon, had not the reflections it contains, been suggested to me by the confusions in Paris, 10th August that year. Though I neither approve, nor practise, going to the pulpit, without studying my subject as carefully as health and leisure allow; this Sermon, like many I have preached for some years past, was not written. It happened however to be acceptable, and, I hope, useful, to many of the hearers, who wished to be instructed and edified, and had no disposition to censure or ridicule expressions less accurate or elegant. In a few weeks I was solicited to publish it, by Gentlemen, whose rank and character, as well as my obligations to some of them, gave great weight to their request. The melancholy transactions at Paris, 2d and 3d September, on the first of which days I preached the Sermon, by that time were known here; and probably made these applications more importunate. Bad health, however, for several months, prevented my compliance with them, as I could not bear the fatigue of preparing for the press, a discourse in so imperfect a state. I have now recollected, as exactly as I could, what I spoke from the pulpit; and, am persuaded, have omitted or changed no leading sentiment. If any, who were my hearers, observe, a few new illustrations, and a little difference of style, they will excuse what was unavoidable, in a Sermon chiefly published from memory.

“ JOHN ERSKINE.”

EDINBURGH, }
25th May 1793. }

effects?---I pretend not to determine, to what period this prophecy relates: whether to the confusions in Judea, during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes; or to those which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; or to judgements, first on the Protestant churches, and then on their anti-christian enemies, previous to the glory of the latter days. Important as the revolutions are, which have taken place, or are likely to take place in a neighbouring country, the prophecy may relate to events still more important, and probably at a greater distance.---Yet events, nearly resembling one another, have taken place in different ages and countries. ‘The thing which hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun ^a.’ Whatever therefore was the original view of Isaiah, or rather of the Holy Ghost who inspired him: yet, as expressions and images are employed, which paint the present distresses of a neighbouring kingdom, and the causes of these distresses; I hope, I handle not the word of God deceitfully, when I take occasion, from them, to delineate the fatal consequences, and to trace the sources of anarchy, that you may avoid the conduct which tends to these calamities.

I. I begin with representing the fatal consequences of anarchy.

Of these we may be convinced, by viewing the greatness of the blessings which anarchy destroys. Happy the prince, and happy the people, when lawful government is well established, wisely administered,

^a Eccl. i. 9.

ministered, duly honoured, and cheerfully obeyed! The persons, characters, and properties of the innocent, are protected; good order is preserved; and the duties of every different situation, employment and rank, are faithfully discharged. The political body is healthy and safe. Every member, as it means the aid of others, studies to be serviceable to them; and, content with the destinations of Providence, performs its proper functions, without arrogantly aspiring after a more honourable place. The lower ranks of life behave respectfully to the higher. The higher claim no more than what is due to them. Both are subject to the legislative and executive powers. The ruler will not invade the rights and liberties of his subjects: and, in using his authority, remembers, that it was given for their welfare, not for their hurt. The subject will not violate order, stop the wheels of government, and subvert a wise and good constitution. He keeps his post, goes not out of his line, acts not as a busy body in other mens concerns, and exercises not himself in great matters, or in things, too high for him. Distinguished genius and penetration, improved in wisdom by careful attention and long experience, are as eyes to the community: while the hands of the mechanic and labourer supply its necessities.

These blessings are interrupted, when the power of such a government is suspended; and, when it is destroyed, they cease. When the covetous, ambitious or revengeful, encouraged by their strength and numbers, assume the office of rulers and judges, the blessing is turned into a curse. Power formerly useful by preserving the safety of individuals; now,
by

by destroying it, becomes pernicious. Grievous indeed must be the evils, which tyranny inflicts or threatens, when, for removing or preventing them, the exposing a state to anarchy becomes wise and just.

Anarchy, by levelling all ranks, transgresses a great law of nature, and of the God of nature; and stops a chief source of social happiness. Where abilities, dispositions, situations and enjoyments, differ, power and influence cannot be equal. All are not born with the same strength of body, or vigour of mind. Diligence and exertion gain what indolence and laziness cannot acquire. Wisdom and frugality preserve and increase what rashness and extravagance dissipate. The children of parents, whose circumstances are narrow and straitened, begin life with fewer advantages, than the offspring of the wealthy. All these differences promote the security and happiness of mankind, in a degree which would be impossible, if in these respects all were equal. They who gain, or inherit riches, need the labours of the poor; and the poor need their money. Hence arise the important relations of servant and master, borrower and lender, people and prince. Now, by anarchy, these relations are turned upside down. ‘It shall be, as with the people, so with the prince; as with the servant, so with his master: as with the lender, so with the borrower ^b.’ ‘Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place; servants ride upon horses, and princes walk as servants upon the earth ^c.’ The inheritance left by parents, and the gains of honest industry, become

^b Isa. xxiv. 2.

^c Eccles. x. 6, 7.

become the prey of covetousness or envy. Business ceases. Anxious uncertainty discourages exertion. The confidence necessary for commerce, is extinguished. The best comforts of life are embittered, by the dread, that the next hour they may be lost. The rude, uncultivated savage, as he assumes no authority over his fellows, fears not their unprovoked attacks. But, when anarchy succeeds order and government, every son of folly and pride accounts himself entitled to rule. Every one is exposed to the baneful effects of these absurd claims. A multitude come together; the greater part know not for what purpose. 'Some cry one thing, and some another; for the assembly is confused^d.' Suddenly, malice casts her eye on a man of innocence and virtue, and arraigns him as an enemy of mankind. Weakness and credulity believe the charge. Frenzy condemns; cruelty punishes. In a few minutes, men, of the meanest talents, and the most depraved hearts, step forward as accusers, as witnesses, as judges, as executioners. The loyal subject, and the peaceful member of society, on groundless suspicions of favouring despotism, is murdered, without any form of trial.---Yonder walks a cool-headed, though warm-hearted patriot. Deep penetration, improved by careful study and long experience, suggested to him the wisest plans for establishing and advancing the public welfare. In an ill-fated hour, a mob is convoked, where he is proclaimed a traitor, and dragged to a scaffold: his breath goeth forth; he returns to his dust: in that day, his thoughts perish. Blessings are
buried

^d Acts xix. 32.

buried with him, which his salutary counsels might have ensured to an extensive kingdom, and to generations yet unborn: alas, little prospect remains of their rising again! The frequent exhibition of such scenes, diminishes their horror; steels the heart against every compassionate feeling; and trains up men for committing the most shocking crimes, without remorse. The contagious madness, which prompts to these barbarous deeds, flies from one province of a kingdom to another. Neither youth nor age, wisdom nor folly, virtue nor vice, can shield from its dreadful consequences. There is no safety to him that goeth out, or to him that cometh in. ‘The highways are unoccupied, and ‘the travellers walk through by-ways.’ Or, to use the striking language of Isaiah in this chapter, ‘The land is utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled. ‘The merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of tabrets ‘ceaseth: the noise of them that rejoice, endeth; ‘the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink ‘wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to ‘them that drink it.’ Formerly, the metropolis of a kingdom, was a ‘city of confusion.’ It was full of hurry and bustle, from the multitude who crowded to it for amusement, for improvements in science, for commerce, for visiting the court, and for soliciting honours. ‘The city of confusion ‘is broken down. Every house is shut up, that no ‘man may come in. The mirth of the land, *a land ‘where mirth was least checked*, is now gone. The ‘treacherous dealers deal very treacherously. He ‘who flieth from the noise of the fear, falls into the ‘pit;

^e Judges v. 6.

^f Isa. xxiv. 3, 7, 8, 9.

‘ pit ; and he who cometh out of the midst of the
‘ pit, is taken in the snare ^g.’

This, and more than this, is the natural consequence of anarchy. - A land, where there is no order, is a land of darkness, and of the shadow of death. A community, which hath no eyes and guides, must wander and perish in the paths of destruction and misery. Liberty, property, honour, life, are not secure for a moment ; when any one, who pleases, and finds himself able, may take them away, without being authorised by the community, without observing any form of trial, and without requiring any sufficient evidence of guilt. Where none are armed with sufficient power, to be terrors to evil-doers, and the protectors of them that do well, a nation becomes as a ship without a pilot, or a flock without a shepherd. Envy and malice rage unrestrained, and soon introduce confusion and every evil work. He, who is the God of order, and not of confusion, never meant, that every member of society should possess an equal authority, of determining and executing what he apprehended to be for the general good ; and should, without check or controul, exercise that authority, at what time, and in what manner, seemed right in his own eyes.

It is none of the least evils of anarchy, that they, who suffer or dread them, imagine they cannot fly to too great a distance from what hurts or alarms them ; and, hence, rush upon evils still greater. The authors of anarchy, though they boast, and possibly believe, that they are the firm friends of liberty ; yet, if bribed by her bitter enemies, could

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not

not more effectually ruin her cause. When order, subordination, and the blessings connected with them, are destroyed, the short-sighted seek shelter in despotic power. Ill-judged, and unconstitutional measures, in the last century, for redressing real grievances, and checking the usurpations of the prince, inflamed the evils which they were meant to remove; introduced a new form of tyranny; paved the way for restoring monarchy; and gave the monarch signal advantages, for acquiring, and transmitting to his successors, absolute and unlimited authority. The miseries of civil war, the disorders of republican government, and the treacherous behaviour of some who had talked loudest for liberty, were remembered and exaggerated; and drove many, in the rage of indignation, or the madness of joy, to the opposite extreme, of yielding almost every thing to the sovereign. The principles of passive obedience, and non-resistance, became palatable. Evils, more lasting and incurable than those of Cromwell's government, would have been entailed on Britain, had not a kind Providence prevented it, by the indolence of one prince, and the bigotry of another. Had such scenes of confusion, cruelty and treachery, prevailed, as have dishonoured a neighbouring kingdom, the spread of arbitrary principles, after the Restoration, would have been more extensive; and, perhaps, their baneful influence, in reconciling the nation to slavery, would have been irresistible.

The best form of government, the most excellent system of law, and the wisest administration, like every thing human, is imperfect. That, therefore, is of a malignant tendency, which discourages legal
and

and constitutional measures, for reforming what is wrong, and remedying what is defective. Now, this is a natural effect of the dread of anarchy. Disorders, which cannot be prevented in changes accomplished by violence, terrify from attempting the most proper and reasonable alterations, even by the gentler method of persuasion : and, to avoid the reproach of sedition and faction, those, whose prudence exceeds their zeal, are dumb with silence, and hold their peace even from good. They know, that their words and actions will be painted in the most unfavourable light ; and that the faults of one of a party, will be ascribed to another, by whom they are unknown or disapproved.

II. I am now to trace the sources of anarchy, in rulers, or subjects, transgressing the laws, and neglecting the maxims, which reason or revelation prescribe, for securing the happiness and peace of society.

Some may ask, Should the pulpit canvass the propriety of political measures, about which the wise and good think differently?---No. It would be as foolish and impious, as to preach on the method of fencing or improving a farm ; on the validity of a claim for an estate ; on plans for building or repairing a house ; or on the evidence of a pannel's innocence or guilt. Those, who have inclination, leisure and ability, lawfully may ; and those whose authority must determine these matters, ought, from a sense of duty, carefully to examine them : but, the place for teaching or learning them, is not the house of God.---Yet, though these questions have nothing to do with the pulpit, general maxims of

virtue and prudence, which should guide in considering and determining them, are an important branch of moral instruction. The Book of Proverbs contains a variety of rules for right conduct in life; and Scripture history displays the opposite effects of their observance or neglect, and shows how the advantages of society and government have been improved and secured, and the disadvantages which may some times attend them, prevented or removed. The teacher who keeps back from his hearers nothing profitable, but declares to them the whole counsel of God, will sometimes illustrate these portions of the sacred volume: and surely, their applicability to questions, which excite general attention, renders not this the less reasonable.

(1.) I begin therefore with observing, that anarchy is occasioned by violating the laws, which prescribe patriotism, public spirit, love of liberty, and regard to the rights of mankind. Ridicule may be thrown on these dispositions, and the designing may artfully put on the appearance of them. Yet, their native excellence and importance, is not thus destroyed; and, where they are wanting, the pillars of public happiness totter. I mean not, by liberty, that licentiousness, which permits men, without dread of punishment, to be as false, injurious, and malicious, as they choose, in their words, writings, and actions. I mean, the liberty, by which every one enjoys, undisturbed, his just rights and property; is uncontrouled in his lawful pursuits; and entitled, boldly, though decently, to present his complaints to his superiors, that they may be examined, and, if well-founded, be redressed. Such liberty, is the soul, the life, the joy,
the

the strength of a state. It forms a generous character, and excites to heroism in the cause of one's country; which the mean-spirited slave, who cares only for himself, is ready to sacrifice to every narrow interested view. I mean by patriotism, not opposition to a good prince, or wise administration; but, that regard to national happiness, which grudges no necessary expence for suppressing internal riots and disorders, or repelling the invasion of foreign foes. Patriotism watches with the closest attention, and exerts the greatest vigour in dangerous and critical seasons. As the best human institutions have their defects, and are subject to decay, especially where societies are numerous, and composed of various ranks; patriotism prompts to seek the speediest redress of what is amiss, consistent with law, good order, and the general safety. Patriotism considers, that, as in the natural, so in the political body, if the beginnings of disease are neglected, a cure which would then be easy, at last becomes impossible, or is effected with much danger and pain. The patriot, invested with authority, regards the important ends of his office, more than his own interest or ease. Often he communes with his heart; and his spirit makes a diligent search---
' How do I discharge my duty, apply my talents,
' and improve my opportunities of usefulness? Can
' I, with joy, and not with grief, account to God
' and conscience for my employment of precious
' time? Do I never avoid the labours and burdens
' of office, transfer them to others, and by unnecessary delays, lose the most favourable seasons
' for doing good? Can I plead hurry of business, in
' excuse of my neglects, when I find leisure for amusement, for study, for work of smaller importance?'

‘portance?’---With like anxious concern, the patriot-subject inquires, ‘What have I done? and ‘what shall I now do?’ He complains less of bad conduct in others, than that he himself, in many things, daily offends. When power is usurped, or abused; when the just authority of rulers is weakened; or, when the operations of government are wrong directed: he watches against, and endeavours to repel the danger; which the cringing flatterer disguises and varnishes over.---The patriot-preacher, grudges no labour or expence, that he may edify his hearers by his doctrine and life.---He who has the care of youth, diligently trains them to be useful members of society.---And youth, catching the patriot flame, spend not their best years in sloth, but in the service of the public, or in what prepares them for that service.

The spirit of the genuine patriot, is not a spirit of fury, or resentment. When circumstances allow, he has not recourse to violence; but studies to overcome prejudice and hatred, by condescension and gentleness. He applies the severity of the law, only when under the disagreeable necessity of punishing one guilty person, for preventing crimes in others, and for preserving thousands of the innocent.

Anarchy, or something worse, is approaching, when men forget that their own interest is inseparably connected with that of their country; that, with her, they preserve or lose their privileges; that the happiness of every member of the body-politic, depends on that of the whole; and that he, who hurts the public prosperity, counteracts his own.

Liberty

Liberty is destroyed, and anarchy is at the door, when a prince, or populace, dead to every sentiment of public spirit, from jealousies craftily raised or cherished by the malicious, deprive of fortune, honour or life, those who, from the purest motives, fairly and honestly declare their sentiments. I say, a populace. For, a multitude, hurried on by the sudden suggestion of a mean and worthless wretch, or misled by the eloquence of a popular demagogue, have sometimes equalled, or exceeded, the acts of wanton cruelty, for which we detest the memory of a Nero or Domitian. The highest merit is soon forgotten; and the most distinguished virtue ceases to be a safe-guard, when slanderers, or those instigated by them, act as judges or executioners.

Rulers occasion anarchy, by injustice, cruelty, and persecution. Surely, oppression maketh a wise man mad. From the evils of tyranny, men fly to the evils of confusion and disorder.

(2.) Neglect of the maxims of wisdom, taught by reason or scripture, is sometimes the immediate, and sometimes the remote, source of anarchy. Actions and neglects, have consequences which wisdom examines and regards. ‘A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished^h.’ In matters of moment, we had need to act deliberately, and to do nothing rashly. He is not wise, who, instead of coolly weighing consequences, dismisses reason, follows the impulse of prejudice or passion, and, for avoiding a small inconvenience, hazards an intolerable evil. Measures, hastily adopted, often occasion calamities,
which

which cannot be remedied, and end in a bitter, though fruitless remorse. ‘ Surely, the churning of
 ‘ milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of
 ‘ the nose bringeth forth blood: so, the forcing of
 ‘ wrath bringeth forth strife ⁱ.’ A wise lawgiver enacts not laws, which have not been maturely considered, and cannot be safely executed; lest, by frequently suspending, altering, or abrogating them, he dishonour himself, and weaken the authority of government. Wise rulers discourage the practice of raising and spreading false alarms, lest even just and seasonable alarms should be less regarded. Yet, placed on a watch-tower, they notice even the distant approach of danger, and give seasonable warning, that, if possible, it may be timely resisted and repelled. If they have not understanding of the times, if they know not the proper means of accomplishing good designs, and of guarding against whatever might defeat them, their ruin, and the ruin of their subjects, fast hastens. ‘ But, if every
 ‘ purpose is established by counsel, and in the multitude of counsellors there is safety,’ it is peculiarly requisite, ‘ with good advice, to make war ^k.’ What king, who properly attends to his own interest, and that of his subjects, ‘ going to make war
 ‘ against another king, sitteth not down first, and
 ‘ consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with
 ‘ twenty thousand: or else, while the other is yet a
 ‘ great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace ^l.’ It is wise, in most cases, to ‘ leave off contention before it is meddled
 ‘ with

ⁱ Prov. xxx. 33.^k Prov. xx. 18.; xxiv. 6.^l Luke xiv. 31, 32.

‘with ^m.’ ‘He who girdeth on his harness,’ however great his power, or however good his cause may be, acts foolishly, if he ‘boast himself as though he put it off ⁿ.’ An army, which thought arrogantly of their own strength and courage, and despised and insulted their enemies, have often shamefully turned back in the day of battle; or, if they have in the end prevailed, have been weakened, or ruined, by the expence of blood and treasure which the victory has cost them. Better therefore, is the wisdom which secures peace on equitable terms, than weapons of war °.

The prince who appoints, or the people who elect, lawgivers, judges, or commanders of fleets or armies, peculiarly need wisdom, especially in a stormy, tempestuous season, when a head-strong inexperienced pilot at the helm, exposes the state to confusion and anarchy.

The wise subject will not, with the simple, believe every word ^p, and hastily take up a bad report against his ruler. The fatal effects of Absalom’s insinuating address, show, how easily the artful and eloquent, under a pretence of promoting liberty, and a just administration of government, may lead the weak, though well-meaning, to measures destructive of both. Where the ends of government are in any tolerable degree answered, the experiment of a revolution, for bettering the state of a kingdom, is sinful and hazardous. Grievances may be real, and their redress properly sought by legal methods; and yet, reason and virtue may require, that they should be submitted to, rather than

† I i i

that

^m Prov. xvii. 14.

^p Psal. ix. 18.

ⁿ 1 Kings xx. 11.

^o Prov. xiv. 15.

that any attempt should be made to get rid of them, by steps which tend to subvert an excellent constitution.

Betrayed by indolence and timidity, rulers unseasonably relax the reins of government, and increase dangers, which speedy and vigorous exertion might have repelled. They neglect political diseases in the first stages, when they might have been perfectly cured. By rash and imprudent concessions, they encourage the seditious to new demands, which, however unreasonable, they dare not refuse. ---Or instigated by pride of office, pride of talents, and contempt of those in the lower ranks of life, they govern too much, and refuse concessions, which, if made with a good grace, would secure their own just authority, and preserve the constitution. Imaginary dangers alarm, and means employed against them, occasion real hazard.

(3.) Anarchy is occasioned; and the power of preventing or removing it diminished, by rulers and subjects transgressing the precepts of industry and frugality. Many, who have reduced themselves, by idleness or dissipation, to narrow and straitened circumstances, without scruple, extricate themselves from difficulties, by involving society in confusion and disorder. Often too, rulers, and those in the higher ranks of life, by sloth and indolence, or luxury and extravagance, are, in a great measure, disabled from preserving that public tranquillity, in which they are so deeply interested. This is one reason, why so great a part of the book of Proverbs relates to industry and frugality.

Flocks, being of old the chief wealth in Eastern countries, and the employment of tending them, honourable ;

honourable ; Solomon, Prov. xxvii. 23---27. exhorts the shepherd, and, under that name, all in every station, men in public office, the rich, the honourable, the merchant, the manufacturer, the tradesman, the servant, the day-labourer---‘ Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks.’ Be not slothful in business. Accurately consider the situation of what is committed to thee, that thou mayest preserve it from danger. Dost thou possess numerous flocks? Indulge not laziness. Roll not their important concerns on a hireling, who careth not for the sheep. Employ time and pains, sacrifice ease and pleasure, that thou mayest distinguish thine own sheep from those of a stranger, and even distinguish one of thy flock from another. Examine their dispositions, excellencies, and defects ; and consider the profit to be derived from each, from its fleece, from its young, from its milk. Suit thyself to their respective circumstances. Carry the lambs in thy bosom ; gently lead those that are with young. Seek that which was lost ; bring again that which was driven away. Bind up that which was broken ; strengthen that which was sick.---‘ Look well to thy herds.’ Set thine heart upon them ; love them ; be anxious for their safety, and alarmed at whatever threatens their destruction. Think it not below thee, to walk and labour among them, and thoroughly to inspect them. Delight in business, lest thy thoughts be engrossed by other matters, and thy most important work forgotten, or hurried over. Preserve, improve, properly employ what God has entrusted to thy care : and whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.---Nor think, that these advices are confined

to shepherds, in the literal sense. They extend to all, from the highest to the lowest. Thy lawful business, the honest means of thy subsistence, is thy flock. Subjects, and revenue, are the flock of a prince: children, servants, and property, those of a master of a family: and the shop, and the work-house, those of the merchant and mechanic. Care and diligence are necessary, that calamities may be averted from families, cities, and nations; that the sources of their prosperity may not be dried up; and that their advantages may be strengthened and improved.

Pleasure accompanies, and profit rewards, the faithful labours of the shepherd. In spring and Summer, 'the hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself.' In Harvest, 'the herbs of the mountains are gathered. The beasts of the field need not be afraid; for the pastures of the wilderness spring^p.' While the peasant sleeps, the seed which he cast into the ground, springs and grows up, he knoweth not how. For, without his farther efforts the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear. But, when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come^q. What he sowed in hope, he reaps with joy.---'The lambs are for his clothing, and the goats for the price of the field'. His virtuous yokefellow squanders not away the fruit of his labours, and the produce of his land. She seeketh wool and flax; she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. The heart of her husband doth safely trust

^p Prov. xxvii. 25.; Joel ii. 22.

^q Prov. xxvii. 26.

^q Mark iv. 26—29.

trust in her; so that he shall have no need of spoil^s; no temptation to raise himself from indigence, by invading the property of another.---‘He has goats milk enough for his food, for the food of his household, and for maintenance for his maidens^t.’ His farm and cattle supply, or purchase, for himself and his household plenty of wholesome and agreeable food: nay, the profits of them enable him to buy the field which he farmed, or, perhaps, one still better. In every line of life, success gladdens and encourages their hearts, who attend to their affairs, are diligent in their callings, and active in the duties of their station. The meanest employments generally feed and clothe the industrious and frugal; often better their circumstances; and sometimes raise them to wealth and honour. Thus, ‘through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches^u.’

An opposite conduct gradually undermines, or suddenly destroys, the prosperity which appeared most firm and stable. ‘For, riches are not for ever; and doth the crown endure to every generation?’ If men see not with their own eyes, and devolve on others, the inquiries, cares and labours, to which, by duty and interest, they were personally bound; or if they attend to these things only by fits and starts, when not diverted from them by pursuits more to their taste and humour; if their exertions are often interrupted and relaxed, and almost always feeble and languid; if, from pride and
dissipation,

^s Prov. xxvi. 10, 11, 13, 19.

^u Prov. xxiv. 3, 4.

^t Prov. xxvii. 27.

^v Prov. xxvii. 24.

dissipation, they neglect, or are lazy in managing, their work; if they delay, what necessity doth not constrain them to dispatch: while they flatter themselves, that they are only neglecting and despising little things, and that, in this, neither the faults nor the danger can be great; they themselves, and the valuable interests of the families and communities committed to their trust, fall, by little and little. ‘The desire of the sluggard, innocent as it may be in its nature, ‘ killeth him, because his ‘ hands refuse to work ^w.’ While he saith, ‘ Yet a ‘ little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the ‘ hands to sleep; his poverty comes as one that ‘ travelleth, and his want as an armed man ^x.’ ‘ The sluggard will not plough, by reason of the ‘ cold: therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have ‘ nothing ^y.’ Poverty, the offspring of idleness and extravagance, brings forth dishonest methods of relief. Public confusion is a welcomed opportunity of spoiling the more prosperous, and rioting for a while on the spoil. Transient is their gain and joy: but the crimes which acquired them, issue in calamities, lasting and irretrievable. ‘ Their mischief returns upon their own head, and their violent dealing comes down upon their own pate ^z.’

But, methinks I hear a dissolute youth, placed in a respectable station, and inheriting wealth, earned by a virtuous parent; I hear him say, ‘ I wish ‘ my idle servants, and lazy tenants, would attend ‘ to such admonitions. Happily, I have no occasion ‘ for them. I have much goods laid up in store for ‘ many years. Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, ‘ and

^w Prov. xxi. 25.

^y Prov. xx. 4.

^x Prov. vi. 10, 11.

^z Psal. vii. 16.

‘and be merry: I possess abundance. I have a
‘high prospect of a great deal more. Why should
‘I drudge as a slave, at study or business? Why, for
‘the sake of others, deny myself enjoyments which
‘I can easily purchase? If misfortunes befall me, my
‘rank and influence will open to me many sources
‘of relief. If some condemn me, for what they
‘call luxury and extravagance, and a criminal ne-
‘glect of business, I am not fanatic enough, to sacri-
‘fice true happiness to their rigid notions.’ These
his words are his folly: yet, crafty flatterers, and
profligate companions, approve his sayings.---Are
these, ye wealthy and honourable, the noble and
elevated sentiments which distinguish you from the
vulgar? You are more indebted to the bounties
of Providence, and you derive greater blessings
from civil society, than others: and, Is it grateful
and generous, is it just and fair, on that account,
to pay less regard than the poor cottager, to the
glory of God, and to the good of mankind? Have
you learned, from the oracles of reason, or from
the word of God, that, because to you much was
given, therefore, from you little will be required?
---But, if motives of virtue, and regard to things
unseen and eternal, affect you not; at least, re-
member, that riches are not for ever, and that the
crown doth not endure to all generations^a. Ask
those who know the events of former days, or of
our own times: They will tell you, that neither the
crowns of princes, nor the treasures of the wealthy,
are permanent; and that their transmission to pos-
terity, is precarious. An unexpected reverse of for-
tune, levels the great and the mean. Riches make

to themselves wings, and fly away. Honour is succeeded by disgrace. When the bounties of Nature and Providence are not watched over, secured, and improved; and when breaches are not in due time repaired; the flock, imperceptibly, lessens and decays; and, at last, ruin becomes inevitable. Of this, many a prodigal, sunk in indigence and contempt, are mournful instances. ‘The glutton and the drunkard come to poverty; and drowsiness clothes a man with rags^b.’ His field is grown over with thorns, and the stone wall thereof broken down^c. Reflexions on his follies and his crimes, embitter the sad reverse in his circumstances, which they occasioned; and inability of doing any thing useful for alleviating his own calamities, and those of his family, aggravates his distress. The temptation proves strong and effectual, to better his fortune, by destroying the power, and seizing the wealth and honours of his superiors.

The fall of families, once rich and respectable; the ruin of merchants and tradesmen; the want of the necessaries of life among those in lower ranks, are the natural consequences of idleness and prodigality; while, by an opposite conduct, they might have been prevented. The wickedness and imprudence of men, reprove and correct them; and God justly withdraws abused benefits. ‘Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands^d.’ Fond of ease, of company, and of amusement, she watches not the behaviour of her children and servants; and, ambitious of making as great a figure as the more wealthy, suffers her expences to exceed her income: so that,

much

^b Prov. xxiii. 21.

Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

^d Prov. xvi. 1.

much of her substance is lost, spoiled, or unprofitably squandered away. The master of a house saunters up and down, neglects his work, or executes it slightly; riots and drinks; and thus falls into contempt: loses his employers; and oftener carries to the tavern, than he brings home, the little which he still earns. A gentleman, though no profligate, balances not his receipts and disbursements; considers not how much he may spend, and what expences are profitable for himself, for his family, and for the public: but regulates, by the model of a wealthier neighbour, his table, furniture, and equipage. His possessions, like the sheep of the careless shepherd, forsake him; and, nothing short of a miracle can prevent his ruin. Happy would it be, if his innocent family, and virtuous creditors, were not involved in his destruction! Alas! he contracts debts, which he cannot discharge; and defrauds the merchants and tradesmen whom he employs, and the friends from whom he borrows. Abusing confidence, and ungrateful for favours; often, in one hour, he inflicts deeper injuries, than the highwayman or the housebreaker would have inflicted. When our Lord miraculously multiplied the loaves and the fishes, he commanded his disciples to gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost^c: thus inculcating the preserving and improving the smallest bounties of Providence. Almost all complain of the indolence and extravagance of the times: but few of the guilty have courage to forsake these destructive paths. Dreading to know the worst, they neglect to examine the state of their affairs, and thus suffer them to fall into disorder, and become irretrievable. They

lose composure of mind ; and are too agitated and perplexed, suitably to attend to the great concerns of this, or of the eternal world. Dishonesty in paying debts, paves the way for other instances of dishonesty, and extinguishes every remaining feeling of conscience or honour. When, in private life, the laws of justice and gratitude have been thus violated : loyalty, or patriotism, will seldom prevent men from engaging in any sedition or rebellion, which, they flatter themselves, may better their circumstances.

It has been pleaded, that our luxuries are less expensive, than those of our fathers. But, it should be considered, that the number of smaller expences, which the daily changes of modes and fashions now require, more than counter-balances the expensive articles in their days, which in general were more durable. Modern extravagance can be supplied by smaller sums than that in former days ; and, hence, is more indulged. He who perceives that he could not afford a great sum, forgets, that he will be as surely, though more slowly ruined, if he frequently lays out smaller sums in unnecessary pomp and luxury.

The evils which men bring on themselves and others by extravagance, are the less excusable, as the pleasures it bestows are so mean and contemptible. Conveniencies and superfluities, purchased by lessening one's income, diminish domestic happiness and hospitality. Magnificent houses, fine dress, eating or drinking more plentifully or delicately, seem to increase social joys. But, hours of enjoyment often cost months, perhaps years, of anxious perplexity. The voice of satisfaction and
applause.

applause, heard for a little, from the guests whom we entertained, is soon succeeded by the rough, unfriendly voice of importunate creditors. Unwilling to be disturbed in the pursuit of pleasure; dangers are kept out of sight, till they can no longer be prevented, or removed.---Formerly, there was more hospitality. Men visited and entertained one another, at less expence. There was no striving, who should be most extravagant. Festivals there were, where those, dear to one another, met; and of which, for months before, the prospect was pleasant. But, that faring sumptuously every day, which must destroy a moderate fortune, was less common. Transports of mirth are now sought every day, and perhaps no day for them is found. In quest of happiness, one sex flies from home to the tavern, and both sexes to the ball, to the card-table, or to the theatre. They, whose judgments prefer the joys of friendship, and of their families, have not courage and steadiness enough, to dare to be singular, and to expose themselves to the censure of living worse than others of their station. Bankruptcies would be less frequent, and methods of avoiding them not the most honourable and conscientious, less common, if pursuing the changes and follies of fashion, gave place to the comforts of the frugal, but hospitable table, and of the moderate family festival, where nothing was spent, which either involved a man in debt, or encroached on more necessary and important expences.

(4.) Anarchy is occasioned by neglect of the laws of reason and revelation, which prescribe peaceableness and union. Every kingdom, divided against itself, is brought to desolation. Ships, tho'

driven by fierce winds, may escape shipwreck, if they at the helm unite their counsels and endeavours. But if they, who should direct, and exert their combined efforts, dispute and contend ; mutual jealousies and prejudices embitter their spirits, divide their counsels, and deliver them an easy prey to their common enemies. The most powerful states, by civil discord, are gradually weakened, moulder away, and as chaff before the wind, are swept from the face of the earth. Party-spirit prevents necessary exertions, excites causeless complaints, opposes the reformation of the grossest abuses, and prevents the adoption and execution of the most salutary plans. The lover of peace is as condescending as he can be consistently with a good conscience. When differences arise, though he joins those whose sentiments and conduct he prefers ; he is not hurried by passion, and zeal without knowledge, to ruin, or bring reproach on a good cause. He doth not blindly approve the plans of the worthiest and wisest, or shut his ears against objections to them. Though artful insinuations do not deceive and embitter him ; he listens to, and, when it is well supported, thankfully follows the advice of the meanest. Though he sits not still, under pretence of love to peace, when his country's interest requires activity ; he disturbs not, from spurious patriotism, the public tranquillity ; and neither secretly nor openly, kindles dissension. He will not rip up the bosom of the mother, who bare, who nursed, and who kindly watched over him. Though differences of sentiment might arise, they would occasion no dangerous divisions, if men of integrity and common sense, without adopting or
rejecting

rejecting a proposal, on account of the party which it favours, or of the person who made it, coolly examined what is possible, and what is just. The humble man rejoices, when a better measure is pursued, than occurred to him, or to the leader whom he generally follows. It is union, without common sense, genuine virtue or true liberty; the offspring of prejudice and rashness, and the parent of confusion and every evil work; when every thing, right or wrong, is adopted, as the voice of a leader of a party, or of a mob, directs. Such an union is a desertion of the honest and impartial, and a separation of those, who were, or ought to have been, chief friends. Zeal for measures foolish and dangerous, raises opposition to measures wise and salutary; or furnishes the spirit of opposition with a specious pretext.

They are often disappointed, who seek to obtain, by strife, what they might have obtained by love and peace. Sharp and bitter words hurt a cause; which soft and gentle language promotes and establishes. The harshness of Jephtha, occasioned a bloody war; which, on a similar occasion, the meek, insinuating address of Gideon, prevented. Tenderness and condescension, win those whom violence could not compel. If one has gained your affection, you are naturally disposed to hearken to, and embrace his proposals. Patience and clemency often accomplish, what force and rigour attempt in vain.

Do thy part, therefore, thou who art among the quiet and peaceable, to prevent, or, if that cannot be, to soften and diminish, the calamities of anarchy. Bear the infirmities of thy brother. Do him every

every kind office. Treat him with that courteousness and affability, with which, were your circumstances changed, you would wish him to treat you. By revenging one injury, provoke not another, and a greater. Rather, by passing by and forgiving the wrong done you, melt him, who did the wrong, to a better temper; and secure, for ever, his friendship. Another has hurt thee a little: hurt not thyself more, by harbouring a vindictive spirit. Seek peace with God and conscience; and, amidst the tempests of life, your hearts shall remain unruffled and serene. Yet, purchase not peace with men at too dear a rate. Be not so base and timid, as to connive at, or consent to any thing, which, in your opinion, would prove a public disadvantage. Confine not your attention to the defects and blemishes of those, whom you think it your duty to oppose. Consider, also, their excellencies. Expect difference of opinion, and warm opposition, from those, whose natural tempers, education, connections in life, age and temptations, are opposite to yours. Examine, if the benefit of a dispute sufficiently compensates the time, thought, and fatigue which it has cost. Ask your conscience, Would I not have employed these for wiser and better purposes, had I believed that death was at the door, and the Judge of all, about to call me to an account? Mortify the ‘pride, by which cometh contention ^f.’ Cultivate the love, which ‘beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ^g.’ Lie not on the catch, to take an advantage against another, from every imprudence in his conduct. Make him not an offender, for a rash and hasty word

^f Prov. xiii. 10.

^g 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

word ⁿ. Put the best construction on expressions and actions, which they can reasonably bear. Pray, that He who maketh peace in his high places, would endue all ranks with ' the wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, * and easy to be entreated, without partiality, and ' without hypocrisy ¹.' Happy the land! where * brethren dwell together in unity ²; and, if it be possible, as much as lieth in them, ' live peaceably ' with all men ^k.' They know the importance of the warning, ' If ye bite and devour one another, ' take heed lest ye be consumed one of another ^l.' They reflect, that ' the beginning of strife, is as ' when one letteth out water.' Though the eruption seems to be small when the water begins to break through banks and fences, the gap soon enlarges and widens, and a rushing torrent spreads devastation every where. Wisely, therefore, they ' leave off contention before it is meddled with ^m.' They attend to the present advantages of a good constitution, and wish not to barter it for fanciful improvements, which, when tried, might produce unforeseen mischief. They lament, that the blessings of a regular government, are not suitably valued, when enjoyed; and that there is any danger, that the first conviction of their inestimable worth, should arise from their irrecoverable loss.---Still, insensibility of, and ingratitude for national blessings, is a crime of too deep a dye, to be charged upon any man, wantonly, and without proof. Subjects occasion anarchy, by fondness for changes, neither necessary nor expedient. Rulers occasion it,

^h Isa. xxix. 21.

ⁱ James iii. 17.

^j Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

^k Rom. xii. 18.

^l Gal. v. 15.

^m Prov. xvii. 14.

it, when, in consequence of the misrepresentations of the interested and malicious, they frown upon, and discourage the honest and loyal, as if there was the clearest evidence of their guilt, because they think, that defects in a constitution should be corrected, and abuses in the administration of government redressed. Though convinced that spots and blemishes diminish beauty, and ought to be removed, when it can be done with safety; I will not get rid of them, by diet or medicine hazardous to life or health. Though comfortably lodged, you feel some inconvenience from a window of a garret story: yet, it follows not, that, to get free of it, you would weaken your house, or consent to pull it down. It is, therefore, rash judging, to arraign a neighbour of good understanding, and acknowledged integrity, for such absurdity and impropriety in his political plans, as only the weakest commit in private life.

(5.) Anarchy is occasioned, by transgressing the great laws of religion. Without justice, integrity and kindness, in the various intercourse and connections of life, there is no social happiness. Now, religion alone inspires that love to mankind, which habitually inclines to these virtues, and guards against the temptations, and supports under the trials and difficulties, with which the exercise of them is often attended. Religion produces the most perfect union: for it inspires, with the same general principle of action, supreme regard to the glory of God, unfeigned affection to our neighbour, and a willingness to sacrifice, whatever in its own nature opposes, or, through peculiar circumstances, becomes incompatible with, these. In proportion

as the law of love is observed, and God's will done on earth, as it is in heaven; rulers and subjects cheerfully perform their respective duties, and are happy in one another. No one injures another in his person, his property, or his honour; and, in imparting happiness, all esteem themselves happy. The honour, the perfection, the comfort of each individual, rejoices the whole community; and the prosperity of the community rejoices each individual. Where there is no religion, the firmest support of government is removed, the surest bond of social union is broken, and a wide door is opened for vice to enter, and to usher in disorder and misery. To wretches, who despise her precepts, and set their highest affections on things below, public confusion, and the ruin of all around them, appear desirable, when they promote their mercenary purposes. But, religion removes the temptations to anarchy, and stimulates to resist its approach with steadiness and vigour. She mortifies the love of money, that root of all evil; excites to take heed, and beware of covetousness; convinces, that man's life, *the true happiness of it*, consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; and teacheth her disciples, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content. The good effects of other principles of action, are precarious. If avarice and ambition often stimulate to a conduct beneficial to society, they equally stimulate to an opposite conduct, when private interest interferes, or is viewed as interfering, with that of the public. The pretended man of honour scruples not to perpetrate cruel and treacherous deeds, which he can conceal from the eye of mankind, or

so varnish over, as to prevent their hatred or contempt.---Among a people, governed by passion and appetite, and regardless of moral and religious obligations, crimes will be openly perpetrated, which, by their natural operation, as well as by the just vengeance of God, must involve them in ruin. ---The plans of the selfish and interested, are viewed with jealousy and suspicion; and hence, are often opposed when they might have been safely adopted. But men, eminent for religion and virtue, are esteemed and loved by the religious and virtuous; and even venerated by bad men. Hence, their character powerfully recommends every proper measure which their judgment and sagacity suggest. ---Though contemners of religion boast of public spirit, they cannot be trusted in critical times. For gratifying a favourite passion, they will violate the most sacred obligations, and scruple at no act of deceit or violence. Where religion is disregarded, and atheism, infidelity, and contempt of every thing serious, prevail; by the natural course of things, good morals, and, with them, public prosperity, must decline. Where there are no impressions of duty, unbridled passions push on to any wickedness which promises a present advantage. Luxury, dissipation, arrogance, injustice, treachery; every vice which corrupts the heart, exhausts national vigour, destroys mutual confidence, and saps the foundations of public security; enter, and reign unrestrained. Sceptical, licentious principles, when they spread, and take deep root among all ranks, are the shame, and must be the destruction, of a nation. Religion, alone, imparts those dispositions, and that strength of mind, which faints not

in adversity; in the darkest situation, is serene; firm, in spite of temptation; resolute in danger; and, in the public cause, prepared for the most generous efforts and the most costly sacrifices. The subjects, who know their God, will be valiant and steady in executing, what their pious rulers have wisely planned. Their greatness of mind will stoop to nothing mean and low; and will rather forfeit life, than preserve it by terms base and dishonourable. ‘The righteous are bold as a lion^a :’ and, in the path of duty, ‘though a host should encamp against them, and war should rise against them^o,’ they are not deterred by the danger. It is no wonder, that unbelievers, through fear of death, are, all their lifetime, subject to bondage. But, what should intimidate those, who know that death will prove to them unspeakable gain? In the uncertainty of events, they listen to the calls of duty; and ‘are of good courage, and play the men for their people, and for the cities of their God; looking up to the Lord to do that which seemeth him good^p. Though their first efforts are unsuccessful, they ‘faint not in the day of adversity, because their strength is small^q;’ considering, that he who losses a battle, may, in the end of the war, triumph.

The most active care, and vigorous exertions, are often blasted by Providence. ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh in vain.’ Unless the Ruler of the universe smile upon, and bless the endeavours of parents,

L l l 2

rents,

ⁿ Prov. xxviii. 1.^o Psal. xxvii. 3.^p 2 Sam. x. 12.^q Prov. xxiv. 10.^r Psal cxlvii. 1.

rents, of teachers, of magistrates, of soldiers, however prudently directed, they will not accomplish the desired end. If calamities befall those, who do their duty, and, with humble resignation, leave events to God; much more are those exposed to them, whose anxious cares and uninterrupted labours hardly leave them time to eat or sleep, and who yet after all, dread that they have not done enough: their confidence and expectation resting on their own wisdom and diligence; whereas, often, in the midst of perplexity and danger, ‘God giveth his beloved sleep,’ and enableth them to cast their cares upon him, who is able and willing to care for them. He surprises and prevents them with the blessings of his goodness; and doth for them abundantly beyond what they can ask or think; so that, when he turns again their captivity, they are as men that dreamed. ‘The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He will keep the feet of his saints; and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail.’ ‘He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings.’ ‘The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.’ ‘There is no king saved by the multitude of an host. A mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety.’ If, in the pursuit of business or pleasure, men neglect religion; if they rob God, and rob their own souls of the time which should have been employed in meditation,

§ Psal. cxxvii. 2.

† 1 Pet. v. 7.

u 1 Sam. iii. 7, 9.

v Dan. ii. 21.

w Dan. iv. 32.

x Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17.

meditation; prayer, and reading or hearing the word, if they are influenced by mean and selfish, not by pious and benevolent, motives; if they do evil, that good may come, and accomplish their designs by shocking deeds of treachery or cruelty: their courage, their subtilty, their numbers, cannot hinder a just and holy God from rendering sevenfold into their bosoms, the evils which they inflicted, or intended to inflict, upon others.---If it is objected, that there is often one event to the righteous and to the wicked ^y; let it be observed, that ‘the righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,’ and either ‘delivereth them out of all their troubles ^z,’ or ‘causeth all things to work together for their ‘good ^a.’ But, where God sees meet to punish, he directs not public deliberations, suffers counselors to overlook the wisest plans, and to be inattentive to some circumstance highly important---‘To ‘set up on high, those that be low, that those who mourn may be exalted to safety: he disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hand cannot perform their enterprize. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with darkness in the day time and grope in the noon day as in the night ^b.’ In other instances, by events which no human sagacity could foresee, the best-laid plans are baffled; and designs, foolishly contrived, perfectly succeed. Calamity and ruin follow attempts, in consequence of their being made a little too early, or a little too late. Thus, often, ‘the race is not to the swift, nor ‘the battle to the strong; neither bread to the
‘wise,

^y Eccles. ix. 2.

Psalm. xxxiv. 17.

^a Rom. viii. 28.^b Job v. 11—14.

‘ nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to
 ‘ men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to
 ‘ them all ‘.’ Or enemies are raised up, prompted
 by ambition or revenge, who display uncommon
 courage and conduct; despise danger and difficulty;
 and overturn what seemed most firmly established.
 God alone, can avert even those calamities, whose
 probable approach men discern. A people, who
 despise the ruler of the universe, and, in spite of
 all warnings, live according to their wicked incli-
 nations, have nothing to hope from his favour, and
 every thing to fear from his just displeasure. For,
 He, against whom there is no understanding, or,
 counsel, or wisdom^d, is ‘ angry with the wicked every
 ‘ day^e:’ and, though ‘ his eyes run to and fro through-
 ‘ out the whole earth, to show himself strong on the
 ‘ behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him^f;’
 yet, when his people trust in an arm of flesh, and
 look not to their heavenly Father for protection, he
 may visit this iniquity with painful rods and chas-
 tisements. Communities, therefore, in neglecting
 to promote religion, neglect the best means of their
 own safety and interest. To make rulers account-
 able for the public welfare, without empowering
 them to do this, is to require them to make brick
 without straw; and to defend the state without en-
 couraging its best friends, or guarding against its
 most dangerous foes. Promissory oaths, or oaths
 for confirmation, are often indispensably requisite,
 for ending disputes, and preventing disorder: but
 their force and influence can only arise from con-
 viction, that God is now the witness of mens con-
 duct,

^e Eccles. ix. 11.^d Prov. xxi. 30.^e Psal. vii. 11.^f 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

duct, and will hereafter be their impartial judge. Besides, when devotional exercises, and God himself, are disregarded, we need not be surprised at the freedom and contempt with which fellow-creatures, though in the highest offices, are treated.

Is there not cause to lament, that religion, the best preservative against anarchy, is so much decayed among us? How formal, superficial, and lukewarm, the religion of many! Instead of delighting in devotion, they say, What a weariness is it! They pull away the shoulder, make their hearts like an adamant, and stop their ears, that they will not hearken to the voice of the charmer; though charming never so wisely. Few watch over their hearts, lips, and lives; walk circumspectly; and follow the Lord fully. Where, now, is that heavenly-mindedness; that panting for the courts of God, and for his presence in ordinances; that hatred of sin; and those desires of standing perfect in all the will of God, which distinguished many of our forefathers? Riches, honours, and pleasures, are more esteemed than the favour of God, fellowship with him, and conformity to his blessed image. We need not wonder, that deference, respect, and homage, to those in superior stations, is so much diminished; when, to merit these is seldom their care. He who forgets the duties and decencies of his office, teaches others to forget *his* dignity. They that despise the Lord, shall be lightly esteemed. Besides, the contempt of religion, which has distinguished many in the upper ranks of life, proves fatal to them, by being, through their example, communicated to those in the lowest. A mob, who have no character or honour to lose, allured by the property

property of the great, and confiding in their numbers, seize the reins of government, and rule with tyranny and cruelty. In times of the greatest danger, Providence has often signally interposed, for preserving our liberty and constitution. Let us not be ungrateful for these distinguished favours, and counteract their kind intentions. Let us not, from malice, rashness, or indolence, hasten the destruction of a country; to which we have been so deeply indebted, and, with which, we are united by so tender ties. Let every one serve the public, by personal repentance and reformation; by resolving, that he and his house will serve the Lord; and by recommending religion to all on whom he may have influence. If we forsake God, God will forsake us, and leave us to ourselves. Professing to know, and to acknowledge his providence, will not avert the vengeance of heaven; if works, whose language is more unequivocal than words, declare that there is no fear of God before our eyes. Infected with corrupt and dissolute manners, brought low by pride, consumed with envy, divided by contention; false allurements will betray to pursue happiness in the path of destruction and misery.

Individuals and nations often conceive a deceitful confidence, by turning their attention from their own vices, to the more profligate temper, and shocking behaviour of others: but the sacred oracles warn us, that God, on account of their transgressions, may suffer his professed people to be spoiled, robbed, and ruined, by the violence of the worst of men. ‘ Who among you will give ear to
‘ this? who will hearken and hear for the time to
‘ come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to
‘ the

‘ the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom
‘ we sinned? For they would not walk in his ways,
‘ neither were they obedient to his law. There-
‘ fore, he hath poured upon him the fury of his
‘ anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath
‘ set him on fire round about, yet he knew it not;
‘ and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart ^g.’
When some told Jesus, ‘ of the Galileans, whose
‘ blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices:
‘ Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that
‘ these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans,
‘ because they suffered these things? I tell you, nay:
‘ but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
‘ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam
‘ fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sin-
‘ ners above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell
‘ you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all like-
‘ wise perish ^h.’

Isa. xlii. 23—25.

h Luke xiii. 1—5.

† M m m

SERMON

SERMON XIX.



ON SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.



PSALM lxxxviii. 18.

LOVER AND FRIEND HAST THOU PUT FAR FROM ME; AND MINE
ACQUAINTANCE INTO DARKNESS.

TO such melancholy events as this text represents to us, every man is exposed; and there are few who now hear me, who have not experienced, or will not hereafter be visited with them. Friendships among mortals are contracted under this condition, that one shall bewail the death of another. It is the wretched distinction of advanced age and experience, to witness many scenes of sorrow. Our friends, or relations, or parents, or children, or husbands, or wives, are gone to their long home. One staff on which we leaned has failed us after another; and few of our associates now survive, who commenced with us the journey of life. In the midst of society many deeply feel the distresses of solitude, and languish away a wearisome life among those, by whom their death is desired, and to whom their life is a burden.---What important

portant instructions is such a situation calculated to convey! How plain, how powerful, how pathetic, the voice of dying, or of departed friends! Yet alas! how soon forgotten! How quickly do the impressions which we receive from it, become as “a morning cloud, and as the early dew,---which goeth away!” For a while we hear it with the most serious attention. The edifying and exemplary life, the triumphant death, the kind and pious counsels, and the tender or affectionate farewell of a beloved companion, for some days or weeks employs our thoughts, or engrosses our conversation. By degrees, new connections formed, new projects devised, new pleasures pursued, divert the stream of reflection into other and far distant channels, plunge the heart as deep as ever into worldly hopes and fears, and revive the fondness for what was very lately pronounced to be vanity and vexation of spirit. The tears shed for departed friends are then shed in vain. Those who were “stricken of God, “and afflicted,” hearken no longer to the voice of the rod, and reap no lasting improvement from its correction.

It may therefore be useful to take occasion from my text, *first*, to speak of the sorrow which we feel for the death of our friends, and of the bounds within which it ought to be restrained: And, *secondly*, to point out the practical lessons which we ought to receive from their death.

I. I am to speak of the sorrow which we naturally feel, when we are bereaved of dear and worthy friends, and of the bounds within which it ought to be restrained.

When our wound is yet fresh, our sorrow on such occasions, is what we cannot, and indeed, what we ought not to avoid. The quick and painful feelings excited by the death of a dear and faithful friend, nature has never the power to suppress. The want of them is sturdiness, and not strength of mind. It is nature vitiated and depraved, not nature improved. Friendship was intended to give a higher relish to the innocent joys of life, and to solace us under its distresses. But cold must be that friendship which doth not mourn the death of a friend. The heart which is incapable of knowing this bitterness, is to be pitied rather than to be envied : for it is equally incapable of the highest, and most exalted social delights. If Christianity pronounces it the height of profligacy to be without natural affections, the tears which flow from such affections, Christianity cannot forbid. What nature hath implanted, the religion of Jesus means not to extirpate, but to moderate and direct. When the lamp of life is extinguished, and the breath of the nostrils expires, in those members of a family, or of a kingdom, on whom, under God, their happiness depended ; or in those, without whom no joy in private life was relished, or with whose sympathy every distress was tolerable ; or in those, to whom our personal interest was dear as their own, who have given us their last farewell : While Christianity enjoins, that we shall “ not sorrow as “ those who have no hope,” the very language of the precept sanctions the lawfulness of our sorrow. The man, the hero, the philosopher needs not to be ashamed of nature’s tears. He would have much more cause to be ashamed, could he retain a Stoical insensibility.

insensibility, in circumstances calculated to touch the tenderest feelings of the human heart. If it was acceptable to God, that all Israel mourned for the son of the wicked Jeroboam, because “in him” there was found some good thing towards the “Lord God of Israel;” surely he doth not condemn the parent’s mourning, when death enters at his windows, and snatches from his arms the darling infant, whose gentle alluring manners, and teachable pliant temper flattered his fondest hopes. That must appear an inconsiderable blessing, the loss of which we little lament. A Joseph mourned over his aged parent. A David bitterly bewailed the death of a rebellious son. He who was perfectly holy, vindicated and ennobled the tears of a Martha and Mary, by weeping as they did at the grave of Lazarus. And he who weeps not, at least he who feels not, when persons of worthy characters, and those with whom he was nearly connected, “are” not suffered to continue by reason of death;” gives a sad evidence that the mind is not in him, that was in Christ Jesus. It betrays a dreadful degeneracy, when the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.

A youth appears on the theatre of life, equally conspicuous for strength of genius, for unwearied activity and application, and for the most tender and benevolent heart. The sublime truths of religion animate him to exercise every grace, and to practice every duty. It is his chief study and his highest delight to diffuse happiness among all around him. He does honour to his parents and relations, and inspires them with the most pleasing hopes, by the indications he gives them of dispositions and abilities

abilities sufficient to presage eminent and extensive usefulness.---But the sighs and tears of parents, the wishes and prayers of many a saint, and the importance of his life to civil society, or to the church of God; can have no effect to persuade the king of terrors to delay his approaches. The lovely youth dies in full strength, "his breasts full of milk, "and his bones moistened with marrow." A variety of pious and benevolent schemes, just ripe for execution, are buried with him. Long and bitterly must all who knew his worth, lament their irreparable loss: while every place and every company wound his more intimate companions with the remembrance of some tender and endearing scene, in which he bore a part.

It is not a sorrow suited to such mournful dispensations as this, which Christianity condemns. It is the sorrow of unbelief, distrust, and despair, which, like Rachel weeping for her children, refuses to be comforted, gives up all for lost, and impiously arraigns the wisdom or the justice of the government of God. Shall it not calm the soul tossed with tempests, and if not dry up, at least diminish, the flowing tears, that a voice from heaven, the voice of the Spirit of truth, declares: "Blessed "are the dead which die in the Lord?" They are taken from the evil to come. The storm is turned into a calm, and they are arrived at the destined haven. They forget their sorrows, or remember them with pleasure as waters that are past. Their eyes cease to weep, their bodies are no longer pained, and fear and anguish can never more enter their hearts. They see God as he is. They are satisfied with his likeness. They rejoice that he is
and

and ever will be their Father and their Friend. All their complaints are ended; all their grievances are removed; all their wants are supplied; all their wishes are satisfied. Or if they have one wish which is not gratified, it is this; that the mystery of God may be finished, and that our hearts, and the hearts of all who belong to the mystical body of Christ, may be as full of blessedness as theirs now are.

My brethren, let the painful sensations of your loss by their death, be mitigated by these views of their unspeakable gain. Their bodies indeed sleep. But they sleep in Jesus, who ere long will appear to awake them out of their sleep. "He will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." The earth shall give up the dead that are in her, and the sea the dead that are in her. By the power of a risen Redeemer, his people shall arise; and when Christ who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory.--- Mourn not like those who make flesh their arm, who lean on a broken reed, and whose hearts depart from the living God. When those are taken from you, who were your guides, and from whom you derived your support, and your defence; can you receive no joy or hope from him who hath promised to be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow, and the orphan's stay? Your friend expires. Life has no joy, society no charms; every thing in nature wears a dark and gloomy aspect. Is not this to despise the goodness of God in blessings which remain to you, and to provoke him to bereave you of that, which you so criminally undervalue. The Christian believes that
his

his heavenly Father does all things wisely and well. His highest desires are towards God and towards the remembrance of his name. He prefers the favour of God and fellowship with him to his highest earthly joy. Surely the depression of the heart for a creature is a sorry evidence of such sentiments and dispositions, and can hardly be reconciled with them. The Christian, who acts worthy of his honourable name, sorrows; but he is not overwhelmed, and unhinged by sorrow. He denies not what is due to the feelings of nature and humanity: but he forgets not the claims of his God and Saviour, or the prospects opened to him by his holy faith. He expires in the midst of agonising pain, whose warm affection, anxious care for his best interest, generous, dangerous, and disinterested services, pleasant conversation, and tender expressions of regard in his last moments, the Christian can never forget. The opportunities have now ceased of exchanging with him the endearing tokens of mutual love. Mourn, the pious survivor must; but he cannot murmur. He reflects that the days of his departed friend were with God; that the number of his years and his manner of ending them, were determined; and that bounds were set to his life by infinite wisdom and goodness, which he could not pass.---“ I must, will he say, “ regret the loss of him who was the source
“ of my most valuable and most highly valued
“ earthly comfort; yet still I must rejoice in my
“ friend’s unspeakable gain. While I am tossed by
“ wind and waves, on the ocean of life; methinks
“ I see him safely landed at his desired haven.
“ The dust now covers, the worm now feeds on
“ him, who was the desire of my eyes, and the de-
“ light

“ light of my heart. Yet sorrow not, O my soul,
“ as those who have no hope. God will ransom
“ him from the power of the grave, and redeem
“ him from death. His now vile body shall be
“ fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.
“ Even now while I weep all tears are wiped
“ away from his eyes. While my joys are di-
“ minished, his joys are completed. I look at
“ the things seen and temporal, and my heart is
“ wounded. I look at the things unseen and eter-
“ nal; and oil is poured into my wounds. It is
“ the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.
“ To thy free gift, O Father of mercies, I am in-
“ debted for all the delightful, refreshing, improv-
“ ing intercourse, I long enjoyed with the dear
“ deceased. I will not forget, I will not cease to
“ praise my God for such distinguished, unmerited
“ favours, though they are now withdrawn. The
“ man whom God hath taken was destined for bet-
“ ter things than earth can afford. Far removed
“ from this valley of tears, he has got to yonder
“ blissful regions, where he possesses that fulness
“ of joy, which the most prosperous on earth never
“ tasted. I humbly hope through the blood and
“ merits of my Saviour, that the curtain shall soon
“ be drawn, which conceals from my view, this
“ transporting bliss. Soon shall I witness, soon
“ shall I enjoy it. I shall see again, those who
“ have got before me to Emmanuel’s land. Yea,
“ I shall see, which is infinitely better, the God
“ who loved me with an everlasting love; and the
“ Saviour, who washed me from my sins in his own
“ blood. My earthly friend was not my All. A
“ better friend is the portion of my soul. In him

“ will I hope ; in him will I rejoice. The LORD
“ liveth, blessed be my Rock ; and let the God of
“ my salvation be magnified. My chief good ; my
“ highest joy can never die, can never be taken
“ from me. No creature shall usurp that place in
“ my affection and confidence, which is due to God
“ alone. In my gloomy nights let not the consolations of God be small with me. Whom have I,
“ O Lord, in heaven, but Thee? And there is
“ none upon earth, whom I desire besides Thee.”

Having thus directed your thoughts to the sorrow which we may lawfully indulge for the death of our friends, and to the bounds within which it ought to be confined. I shall in another Discourse suggest the practical lessons which the death of our friends should teach us.

SERMON

SERMON XX.



ON SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.



PSALM lxxxviii. 18.

LOVER AND FRIEND HAST THOU PUT FAR FROM ME; AND MINE
ACQUAINTANCE INTO DARKNESS.

HAVING already directed your attention to the sorrow which we naturally feel for the death of our friends, and to the bounds within which it ought to be confined,

II. I am now to point out the practical lessons, which we ought to receive from the death of our Christian friends.

(I.) It should impress on our minds, a deep and lasting sense of our own mortality.

How important a lesson is this! Serious thought every morning, that we were born to die, and that the day we now begin may prove our last, would go far to check both folly and vice; it would bridle the pursuits of avarice and ambition; it would render tolerable the calamities of this life; and it would not fail to have a great effect in regulating its cares, its busi-

ness, and its pleasures. Death, often remembered, would become familiar; and the terrors of its approach would abate. The prudent foresight of that solemn season, would prepare men for it, that it might not surprise them unawares, or at a disadvantage. They would not set their affections on things below, or labour anxiously for acquiring or retaining them, as if they might be possessed or enjoyed for ever. Remembering that they are pilgrims and strangers on earth, they would seek for a better country, even an heavenly; and not foolishly squander away life in raising tottering fabrics of vanity, or in attempting to grasp what they cannot hold. Life's last and decisive hour would resolve their doubts, guide their behaviour, and as a pole-star, conduct them through the dangerous voyage of active life. No important resolution would be taken, without asking their consciences, in what light the thing proposed to be done, will appear, when the dead, small and great, shall stand before the tribunal of Jesus Christ.

How many monitors are sent by a kind providence of what it so deeply concerns all men habitually to bear in mind! The decays of nature, increasing infirmities, contagious distempers, the silence and darkness of the night, consciousness lost in sleep, thousands falling on the right hand and on the left, the graves on which you tread, the funerals which you accompany.---All proclaim that "the dust must return to the dust as it was, and "the spirit to God who gave it." Yet all this, notwithstanding, men think and speak, and act, as if they had purchased an exemption from the common lot of mortals, or as if they had bound death
to

to give a particular warning of his approach, and to delay it too for a distant period.

What then remains to awaken thoughtless sinners from their fatal slumbers?---The death of friends.---Dying or departed friends are messengers sent from heaven to summons the survivors. Harken, ye careless sons and daughters, to the solemn warning.---Prepare to follow. Ere long, to you also, time shall be no more. In what ye know to have already befallen your friends, ye perceive that which must soon befall yourselves.---Can ye forget with what heart-rending grief ye saw your friend overwhelmed with sickness, racked with pain, pale and languishing, while nature struggled for breath and life, and struggled alas! in vain. This is the common lot of man, and the lot with which thou also, who now hearest me, shouldst lay thy account. Death may soon approach thee also, in this or in a more dreadful form; destroy all hope of recovery; and present before thee, the alarming prospect of thy speedy appearance before the judgment seat of Christ.---Let none exclude from their thoughts these sad and solemn reflections. Let every one say---Where are multitudes of my kinsmen and acquaintances, with whom formerly I daily conversed. Once we were united in our habitations, in our devotions, in our schemes, in our labours, and in our pleasures. Ere long I shall be united with them in death. Soon shall my surviving friends pay to me that tribute of tears, which I have so often paid to friends who have gone before me.

(2.) The death of friends should teach us the vanity and nothingness of this world.

Of this it gives us a far more lively representation.
than

than all the instructions of poets and philosophers, which though attentively heard and fondly admired, are soon forgotten. It is easy to declaim with elegance on the unsatisfactory, and perishing nature of sublunary enjoyments. But though this wisdom of words charms the imagination, it will scarcely change the propensities of the heart, or bridle the unruly appetites, or moderate our love to the objects of sense. The death-bed or the grave of a friend is more effectual to strip these objects of their false and deceitful varnish. We see there, in a just and forcible light, the emptiness and the insufficiency of riches, honours, and pleasures. The plans of happiness appear vain, which, if not sooner, must certainly perish in that hour when our breath goeth forth, and we return to our dust. When the candle of the Lord shines on our tabernacle, and we enjoy the delightful intercourse of worthy and agreeable friends, we are ready to say, it is good for us to be here. But how melancholy and desolate an aspect does every thing wear, when all reminds us of that which once enlivened and doubled our joys; but which now can enliven and double them no more. “What exquisite delight did I
“taste in the endearing society of my friend! What
“important advantages did I derive from it! How
“did her soft and gentle manners, her generous and
“disinterested kindness, her smiling countenance,
“her engaging conversation, her warm attachment to
“me, her faithful, tender, and unwearied attention,
“sweeten sorrow, dispel anxious fear, revive
“drooping hope, gladden the toilsome day, cheer
“the restless night, and give a higher relish to
“every other enjoyment! What was most valued
“and loved, what of all created comforts was dear-
“est

“ est to my heart is now gone. Honour and wealth
“ and pleasure are become insipid. I see and feel
“ vanity and vexation in every thing under the
“ sun.”---“ He is gone” will another say, “ whose
“ care it was to discover and gratify my inmost
“ wishes. In all my distresses he mingled his tears
“ with mine. My frailties he pitied and pardoned ;
“ he was ever ready to cast a veil over them, or
“ endeavoured to correct them by his tender and
“ affectionate advice. In general our sentiments,
“ dispositions, and desires were the same. Our ex-
“ ertions, our mutual confidence, and our suffer-
“ ings for one another’s good, were not limited
“ by that dull interested principle, which many
“ men call prudence. Without reserve, and with
“ the fullest confidence we unbosomed to one an-
“ other our whole souls. But now these happy
“ days are ended. I must see his face ; I must
“ hear his voice no more. O World, how can my
“ heart cleave to thee, when thy best joys are so
“ short and so uncertain !”---“ He,” says a third,
“ whose death I deplore, was blessed with all that
“ the world calls happiness. God gave him riches
“ and honour and a heart to use them. Great were
“ his possessions, high his enjoyments, fair and flat-
“ tering his hopes. His was the sublime pleasure
“ of encreasing the joy, or alleviating the distress-
“ es of all around him. But suddenly all his world-
“ ly plans and prospects were ended by a disease,
“ which, from the first hour, appeared incurable.
“ All that the world desire and delight in, now be-
“ came tasteless to him. All that sets the busy in
“ motion was accounted by him as the drop of the
“ bucket, and the small dust of the balance. The
“ fortune he had gained, the honours he had ac-
“ quired,

“ quired, the approbation and esteem of all around
“ him, were miserable comforters, incapable of
“ of brightening his passage through the dark valley
“ and shadow of death. The knowledge that God
“ through a Redeemer was his Father and his friend,
“ and that alone, enlightened the gloomy scene.
“ The time may be near when his fate shall be
“ mine, and when my eyes also shall be sealed in
“ darkness. Soon my successful worldly projects
“ shall give me no pleasure, and my disappointed
“ designs no pain. Soon shall my honours be laid
“ in the dust, except the honour of having God
“ for my God and portion; and no treasures shall
“ avail me, except treasures in heaven. Let not
“ the hot, incessant pursuit of what I must then be
“ deprived of, divert me from the main end of life.
“ Let me no longer admire and adore a world, which
“ thus deceives her votaries, and forsakes them
“ when most they need her support. I honour my
“ friends as the instruments of my happiness; I will
“ not idolize them as the authors of it. Cease, O
“ my soul, from confidence in man, whose breath is
“ in his nostrils. Father and mother have for-
“ saken thee. The guides and instructors, and
“ even many of the pleasant companions of thy
“ youth, are now no more. Those with whom I
“ am now united by the softest and sweetest ties
“ are equally mortal. The things of the world and
“ the men of the world, may take to themselves
“ wings and fly from me. At the farthest death
“ must part them and me. Shall I not then receive
“ the better part which cannot be taken from me,
“ the heavenly friend, who sticketh closer than a
“ brother?”

(3.) The

(3.) The death of our friends demonstrates the worth and excellency of religion.

Never does the power of godliness more appear, than in the support and joy she imparts in the passage from this to the other world. The dying words, and looks, and actions of those who are near and dear to us, are not so slightly regarded, as alas! the virtues of their lives too often are. O ye who were once blessed with pious friends, how did your hearts burn within you, with sorrow indeed for your own loss; but with joy for that steady faith, and unshaken, fearless resignation with which they encountered the king of terrors, bid adieu to this world, and set out for that unknown country, which their heavenly Father hath promised them! With what cheerfulness did they stand on the brink of eternity, with what serenity of soul wait their dissolution! Notwithstanding a timid temper and an exquisite sensibility of frame, you saw their faith conquering the dread of death, their love longing to be with Christ, and their patience amidst the most oppressive sickness and excruciating pain, still saying, Lord, not my will but thine be done. You heard their songs of joy and praise in that night of adversity. You witnessed them welcoming the king of terrors, as a messenger of peace. And yet you saw not those sweet consolations, transporting prospects and ravishing foretastes of heaven, which their bodily distress concealed, and their stammering tongues were unable to utter. How did religion in the depths of outward affliction, and in the last languishings of nature, strengthen them with all might in the inner man, to all patience and long suffering with joyfulness! How did she bestow beauty for ashes;

and for the spirit of heaviness the garments of praise! Faithful friend, and kind comforter; which when the spirits fail, and there is no help in man at all, remains a treasure in poverty, light in adversity, and life in death! She does not, as the world, fly from the habitations of the distressed. She tenderly soothes their sorrows, binds up their wounds;----nay, fills them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.---What spectator of such scenes, would not wish and pray, “let me die the death of the righteous and let my “latter end be like his.”---That these wishes may be gratified, be exhorted to follow their example, and to lead their lives. Look not on Christianity as a plank, then only to be grasped, when nature is about to sink and the floods to go over the soul. In the days of health and vigour, let her be a light to your feet and a lamp to your paths. Let her become the steady uniform rule of your behaviour, of your words, of your sentiments, and of your inclinations. Would you die in the full assurance of faith? Would you be able to say in your last moments, “I know “in whom I have believed; and that he is able to “keep that which I have committed unto him till “that day?” Let the life which you henceforth live in the flesh, be by the faith of the Son of God. With an humble and penitent, with a glad and thankful heart, receive him who came in the name of the Lord to save you. And hang the weight of your eternal interests on that nail fastened in a sure place, where God hath hung all the concerns of his glory, and of the salvation of an elect world.

(4.) From the death of friends let us learn how important it is to discharge our duty to friends who yet survive.

It is not unusual for little drynesses and misunderstandings

understandings to fall out between those who live together, or who are connected by the ties of blood, affinity, or friendship. These often interrupt and diminish, and, unless speedily remedied, break off those marks of attention and those offices of kindness, which are the necessary fuel of mutual affection, and are among the most precious comforts of this life. Debates arise about trifles. A little spark kindles a fierce contention. Words spoken or actions done thoughtlessly, and perhaps even with a good intention, are considered as designed injuries, or at least as marks of a cold indifference. What is disagreeable and blameworthy is magnified. Real excellencies and sincere indications of kindness are overlooked. Even when affection is warm, one friend often neglects the most proper and seasonable means of promoting another's best interest ; or of preventing him from contracting habits or forming plans, by which his temporal or his eternal ruin is hazarded.---But when a friend or relative dies, if we have the smallest sensibility of heart, how ingenuous are we in finding apologies for his faults, and in excusing his weaknesses and follies. Ten thousand proofs of his affection which formerly made little or no impression on us ; many a favour done to us which we have repaid with coldness or ingratitude ; many a duty to him, which we feel we have neglected ; much pain which we have unnecessarily given him, and which now we cannot mitigate ; a variety of injuries which we have committed against him, and which now we cannot repair ; successive opportunities of saving a soul from death, lost and neglected, never more to return, dwell on our thoughts when he is laid in the dust : they rise and lie down with us ; they bite as an adder, and sting as

scorpion. The son bewails his infatuation when he embittered, by a course of folly and vice, the life of a worthy parent; and perhaps contributed, to bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. The parent laments that ill-judged indulgence, or excessive severity, that neglect of religious instruction, or that unedifying example, by which he contributed to a child's destruction. The surviving husband or wife is seized with anguish in recollecting the circumstances which became the torment of those whose pleasure they ought to have promoted, and which added to the sorrows which they ought to have assuaged. How tormenting must these reflexions prove to us, if we shall experience them, after we know that the hurt we have done can never be redressed, and that the services to which we were bound by the strongest ties can never be performed. ---Do therefore now, what thou shalt certainly wish to have done, when the time for acting is at an end. Perform every proper office of benevolence, while it can yet be performed. Beware of doing that hurt to another, which his death may make it impossible for thee to redress. Whatever thy hand findeth to do for the good of thy friend, do it speedily and with all thy might: for thy friend may die; and there is no work, nor labour, nor device in the grave. The pretexts for treating him with coldness, or neglect, or severity, may then appear to have been frivolous; and thy reflections on their guilt and folly may then fill thee with a galling remorse. Gratefully repay every favour. By mutual courteousness and condescension encrease those tender and delicate regards, which are the balm of human life. What cause of comfort and thankfulness, have families, where

where tears of remorse mix not with their tears of sorrow, when lover and friend is removed far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness!

(5.) The death of friends should kindle within us a longing desire for a blessed eternity.

There is a city of the living God, where all in every age and country, who have been sanctified by divine grace, shall meet together never more to part. To this abode of light and holiness and joy, many near and dear to you have ascended from this valley of tears. There they enjoy delightful fellowship with the innumerable multitude of angels, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, prepared for relishing that fellowship by their own progress to perfection. Many a pleasant hour have you passed together when ye saw God darkly and through a glass. And what then shall you enjoy with them, when ye shall see God face to face! If it was so sweet to taste of the streams, what will it be to drink of the fountain. Christian friendship was not contracted for time only, but for eternity. The Father of mercies implanted not in his children those strong and tender attachments one to another, those desires of a constant and indissoluble union, that in the hour when one friend dies, all his friendship should for ever perish. The attachments of the brute creation are not deep; and absence soon dissolves them. When removed from, they quickly forget one another. But esteem and love for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, are engraven on the hearts of Christians as with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, and length of time, and distance of place, cannot destroy them. These heaven-born attachments,

ments, not confined to days or years, stretch forth into eternity. The thought is dreadful, that such kindred spirits can be separated so as never to converse with, to see or to hear from one another again. If no appetites are implanted even in the brute creation, merely to torment them; can we suppose, that the innocent longings of men, nay, the devout and virtuous longings of the new man, were implanted by the God of nature and grace, without an object to satisfy them? Are those desires disapproved by God, which in their hearts who love and resemble God most, are most strong and lively? If they are approved they shall be satisfied; and those whose hearts were knit together by grace, shall be restored to the friends from whom death tore them away. We naturally wish to be with those whom we love. When old Jacob hears that his son Joseph is yet alive, and advanced to great honour in Egypt, he cannot rest till he goes down there to see him. And when our friends have left that land in which we are yet strangers and pilgrims, our affections should be more weaned from it, and our desires inflamed to get to that better land, whither they have gone before us. Why then do your hopes and wishes tarry below? Indeed you have higher reasons than I am now urging, "to desire to depart."---To be with Christ, to behold God's face in righteousness, to be satisfied with his likeness, and to enjoy immediate and uninterrupted fellowship with him are better and far greater objects, and ought to excite still warmer desires.---Yet surely you do not sin in wishing to be restored to parents, to children, or to friends, who have slept in Jesus. Neither nature, nor grace,
forbids

forbids you to strengthen by that prospect your longing for heaven. Love to the members of Christ's mystical body, will ever flow from love to the head, and shall prove one great source of happiness, when faith shall be swallowed up in sight, and hope in enjoyment. Moderate, then, O Christian, thy sorrow for departed friends with such reflections as these: " My grief is not insupportable. " I know that Jesus has abolished death. I entertain the pleasing hope, that I shall one day be " restored to you, who on earth were my comfort " and my joy. I shall see you again immortal, glorious; free from all the weaknesses and imperfections, with which you were here encompassed. " That connection and intercourse, which, even " on earth were so delightful, shall be much more " so in heaven. Faithful friend, in time, thou " shalt also be my friend through eternity. How " shall we mingle our songs together, to him that " sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb! As those " educated together, when they meet again after " long separation, in advanced age, recollect and " repeat with pleasure, the studies and amusements " of their youth; so shall we remember with transport, how we were trained up for glory, and " through what storms and tempests, snares and " dangers, we have at length landed safe, at the " palace of our heavenly Father. Our endearing " intimacy shall then encrease, and our souls be " more than ever knit together in love. The review of the sorrows we endured in this valley of " tears, shall be joyful, not grievous. And that " which warmly impressed, and powerfully supported us in the distant prospect, shall in the actual

“ tual enjoyment, swell our hearts with rapture,
“ und fill our mouths with praise.”

Let us remember the advantages we have enjoyed by the edifying lives and deaths of our dear departed friends, and study so to improve them, that though parted from them for a season, we may receive them for ever.

To you of this congregation much has been given, and therefore of you much shall be required. ---Your late pastor *, in early life remembered his Creator and Redeemer, knew the God of his fathers, and devoted to his service, the flower of his youth, and the vigour of his strength. His cheerful temper, and entertaining conversation, his taste and genius for some of the fine arts, did not hinder some from ascribing his serious temper in early life, and his zeal, to fanaticism. Providence however soon placed him in a difficult and important charge †, where the affability, meekness, and gentleness which accompanied his faithfulness in his Master's, service, soon shut the mouth of slander; and gained him the esteem of those who were before blind to his best qualities. Many of you can remember the joy with which he was welcomed among you, and how careful he was to approve himself to God, “ a workman that needed not to be “ ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Life.” He did not court the title of an elegant or moral preacher, by neglecting the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; nor did he covet their praise, with
whom

* This sermon was preached in the Church of St Cuthbert's in 1785, immediately after the death of the Rev. Mr John Gibson.

† As minister of St Ninians.

whom *he* is not an evangelical preacher, who inculcates in their due place holiness of heart and life. With earnestness and solemnity he declared the whole counsel of God ; with the delight of a firm believer he proclaimed the joyful tidings of the gospel ; while with the most affectionate solicitude, he urged and besought you who believe on Christ, to be careful to maintain good works. He was none of those who more regard the ornament, the dress, or the drapery of a sermon, than its edifying tendency. He did not perpetually hunt after uncommon and ingenious thoughts on the subjects which he pressed on your attention. He aimed at higher things than merely to tickle your ears, or to gratify your curiosity. With plainness and simplicity, and in a sound and Scriptural style, he studied to instruct the ignorant, to alarm the secure, to comfort the wounded in spirit, and to quicken those who were dead in trespasses and sins. Yet, sensible of the dignity of his office, and of the importance of his ministry, he would not expose himself to contempt, by a low and grovelling style, by childish conceits, or by a false affectation of wit and humour. His public prayers breathed the tenderness, the fervour, the feelings of his heart. The conduct of his zeal for you, his love to the Redeemer, and his pity for perishing sinners, were not confined to the pulpit. Private opportunities of promoting your best interests, were pleasant to him ; and the closet, and the hours in which he unbosomed himself to his friends, testified, how anxiously he travailed in birth for you, that Christ might be formed within you. Religion diffused its sacred influence on his ordinary conduct. He lived in the spirit of the gospel which he preached, and his

personal conduct exemplified the graces and virtues which he recommended to you. Piety and devotion, temperance and purity, mildness and benevolence, shone with distinguished lustre in his temper and behaviour. Remote from bigotry, he sincerely loved the lovers of Jesus, of every denomination. Nor was he unwilling to do justice to the talents of some men, whose abuse of their talents in opposing important articles of natural and revealed religion, he deeply bewailed. He was warm and steady in his friendships. Mutual esteem, harmony and affection, subsisted between him and both his colleagues, though his sentiments and those of his deceased colleague *, were very different in matters of church policy. He was happy both with himself, and with his family. And neither of them had so learned Christ as to think the difference of sentiment in these matters, to be inconsistent either with good sense, or with integrity, or with real religion. Anxious for the peace and prosperity of Zion, he bitterly lamented the heavy breaches which had been repeatedly made in many congregations of his neighbourhood. He rejoiced in the gifts and graces of many of his younger brethren, and in the prospect of their faithful and successful labours, when he and his elder brethren should be gathered to their fathers.

In a word, he was a burning and a shining light, and ye for a season rejoiced in his light. While his health and strength allowed him, he laboured and fainted not. But it pleased a sovereign God, who giveth no account of his matters, to weaken his strength. Since his vigour began visibly to decline, as it did very rapidly during the present

* The Rev. Mr Alexander Stewart.

present year, his inability to serve your best interests in the manner he wished, was his warfare and his burden. Yet in his long continued and heavy distress, and in the immediate prospect of death and judgment, he felt the comfort of this gospel with which he has often comforted others. His placid resignation to the divine will, his patience in sickness and in pain, and the overflowings of his gratitude for the kind attentions paid to him by his family, by his colleague, and by many of his congregation and his friends, were demonstrations of the serenity of mind which he continued to possess, of his humble faith in the gospel which he had preached, and of his firm reliance to his last hour, on the mercy of God through the great Redeemer.

He whom many of you loved and heard, he with whom you lately enjoyed sweet society, he by whose manners many of you were delighted and edified, is now dead. But the word of the gospel which he preached to you, liveth and abideth for ever. And however you may have formerly despised, yet if ye shall even now, remember what you have heard, and hearken to the calls of the gospel, it shall prove unto you, a savour of life unto life. You who often assembled to hear his instruction, and that of other gospel ministers, must one day meet in a greater assembly, to give an account how you have entertained the gracious messages which they brought you. O that divine grace may determine you in this your day, to lay to heart the things which belong to your peace; that ye may be no more "slothful, but followers of" them, who through faith and patience now inherit "the promises."

SERMON XXI.



ON DEATH,



ISAIAH xxv. 8.

HE WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH IN VICTORY.

IN discoursing on these words, I shall endeavour to direct your attention to the *enemy*, to the *conqueror*, to the *wonders*, and to the *completeness* of the *victory*, which they represent to us.

I. The *enemy* is so formidable, that he is justly termed, “the king of terrors ^a.” The conquerors of the earth have themselves been conquered by this universal destroyer. Though he is nature’s destruction, and consequently nature’s aversion; nature knows no method of resisting his violence. He dissolves that near and intimate union which subsists between the soul and the body; which we all experience, though we can neither explain how it was formed, nor, how it is continued. Our foundation is in the dust; we dwell in cottages of clay. Death comes to level the cottage to the ground,

^a Job xviii. 14.

ground, and the soul must be gone from her much loved habitation. The cords of the tabernacle are loosed; and the body once so beautiful and vigorous, is dissolved in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, —The same stroke strips us at once, of all our possessions. The prince can carry nothing with him any more than the peasant. Death as easily wrests the crown from the head of the one, as the spade from the hands of the other. Naked came we into the world; and, naked, death constrains us to return to the dust.---The conquests of death separate, one from another, the dearest friends; deprive them of the joys, which once flowed from their mutual intercourse and connection; and make them willing to remove, from their presence, what was once the desire and the delight of their eyes. “Give me,” said Abraham, of Sarah, who, for many years, had been his much beloved companion, “give me a possession for a burial place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” Oh, how little reason have we, to value immoderately, this present evil world; or to doat on comforts and enjoyments, of which death so easily, so suddenly, and so certainly strips us.

But these destructions of this universal conqueror are inconsiderable, compared with those, to which I must now lead your attention. Death is armed with a terrible sting, even sin. Sin, the greatest evil man can commit, calls for the greatest punishment, which man, maintained in being by an omnipotent arm, can endure. Death, in its sting, hath everlasting chains and darkness, a bottomless pit, a worm which dieth not, a fire which cannot be quenched. Death hath, in its sting, in-
dignation

dignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Death hath, in its sting, all that is amazing, afflicting, distressing, and confounding in the place of torment, and all that which produces, in the wretched inhabitants, “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Death is indeed to the impenitent “the king of terrors,” for, it drags him to the tribunal of an angry judge. To stand at the bar of man is awful; but what is this, compared with the necessity of appearing before the judgment seat of the judge of the whole earth? Yet this the impenitent cannot avoid. “After death is the judgment” when the dust returns to the dust as it was. The spirit of him, who died without an interest in Christ, returns to God who gave it, to be doomed to endless sorrow. Death natural is the dark passage, which leads him to the gloomier mansions of death eternal. The eyes of his body are no sooner sealed in darkness, than the eyes of his soul are opened to behold those great, and never ceasing plagues, which are about to seize him. Dreadful, sometimes, are the convulsions of his dying body; but infinitely more dreadful are the inward convulsions of his departed soul. All are born into this world dead in sin; but woe to that man, who goes out of this world, in that condition. Happy had it been for him, if he had not been born.

I have not been speaking of events transacted in a remote period, or in a distant land; but of a matter, in which we are all nearly and deeply concerned. The extensive conquests of death, and the dreadful desolations occasioned by them, will reach the man, who
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can now banish them from his thoughts; and will plunge him in extreme and endless woe, whom they shall reach in an unpardoned and impenitent state. The prudent man foreseeeth this evil, and hideth himself; but the foolish pass on, and are punished. And where is it, that all made wise unto salvation hide themselves? It is only in the rock Christ. Hide yourselves wherever else you will, death will find you out, and drag you to misery.

You cannot avoid the approaches of this enemy; but you may prevent them from issuing in your destruction. As certainly as you now live, you must one day die. As certainly you must lie in your graves, as you are now out of them. Fly, if you will, for life, to some healthier clime; death will follow you there, and you will carry with you the seed of mortality. Try the most probable means of preserving life. They cannot always succeed. Use the most wholesome food. The meat, you eat, is "the meat which perisheth," and which cannot long keep you from perishing. Consult the most skillful and sympathizing physicians. At length they will prove physicians of no value. Death, notwithstanding all their efforts, will shut those eyes of thine, which are now open. Death will stop those ears, which now hear me; and they shall hear no more, till awakened by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Yet a very little while, in a few years at the farthest, perhaps in a few days, death will bind your hands and feet, and cast you into darkness. Encounter the king of terrors you must; and if you encounter him unarmed, you are for ever undone. You will ask, is there any armour which he cannot pierce? Yes, there is
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an armour, through which he cannot reach you, so as to destroy your soul. Would you meet death comfortably, “take to you the whole armour “of God.” Forget not any part of it; for you will require it all. Especially, take the shield of faith whereby you shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil. The certainty that we must die; the uncertainty, when we shall die, call upon every one of us: “Be ye also ready. Give all diligence, “that ye may be found in Christ, in peace. Give “all diligence to make your calling and election “sure. Let the unconverted fly speedily for refuge to “the compassionate and all sufficient Saviour. Let “the believer keep his evidences for heaven clear “and unsullied. So desire, resolve, and act, in a “dependence on the grace that is in Jesus Christ, “that from the works God has wrought in you and “by you, you may conclude, he hath ordained “peace for you. Implore for the sake of Jesus, “the witnessing and comforting influences of the “Spirit, that you may know the things, which are “freely given you of God.” How sad is it to die in a fearful, desponding frame. But how comfortable to die, looking to Jesus for righteousness and strength, and persuaded that he will safely keep what we have committed to him. Thrice happy the man, to whom, in the struggles and languishings of nature, the conqueror of the king of terrors brings tidings of comfort and of joy! And this leads me,

II. To turn your attention to the conqueror of death.

Who dares to encounter, who is able to overcome

come this conqueror of the greatest earthly conqueror? And in what manner hath he obtained the victory?

The verse immediately following our text tells us, that the conqueror is he, of whom it shall be said. "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the LORD, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

The dignity of his person, and the greatness of his power capacitate him for this conquest. The Prince of life, who had life in himself; who had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again; he, and he alone, could conquer death. Death could not reach the Lord of life without his permission. The grave could not detain him a moment beyond it. The waters of the cistern may be exhausted: not so, the waters of the fountain, which perpetually flow. Now, with Jesus is the fountain of life. Hence, he burst the bands of death, for it was impossible, he could be held of them. The sun, though he may be obscured, cannot be extinguished by the intervening cloud. He dispels it, or breaks through it; and shines forth, in all his brightness and glory.

As God-man-mediator, he was sent and commissioned, qualified and fitted by the Father for this hazardous encounter. He came on the important errand, "that we might have life, and have it more abundantly." He took not this honour to himself, but was called of the Father; and the Father, who is greater than all in the economy of our redemption, could not fall short of his aim in thus calling him. Hence, the Saviour could say;

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“ as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by
 “ the Father ; so, he that eateth me, even he shall
 “ live by me,” John vi. 57. And again : “ I will
 “ ransom them from the power of the grave, I will
 “ redeem them from death. O death, I will be
 “ thy plagues. O grave, I will be thy destruction.
 “ Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”

The sting of death is sin. Christ, by plucking out that sting, hath conquered death. He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity. It was beneath him, with whom are unsearchable riches, to compound for our debt by a partial payment, like a poor bankrupt, who only offers a small part of what he owes. The satisfaction, which he made, was complete. Nay, he fulfilled all righteousness. This we are taught, Isa. xliii. 2. “ The Lord is well pleased for
 “ his righteousness’ sake.” The Lord is well pleased with whom ? With every believer, with all who are in Christ ; with their persons, and with their duties. But, upon whose account, is the Lord thus well pleased ? Is it on account of their dispositions and performances ? No ; it is for Christ’s righteousness’ sake. And why is God well pleased with men, so unworthy in themselves, for the righteousness of Christ ? It is because, by that righteousness, “ he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable.”

Jesus, having thus abolished death, hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. When he laid down his life, he conquered the king of terrors. When he took it up again, he manifested his victory to be complete, and confirmed his own comfortable words, John xi. 25, 26. “ I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me, tho’
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he were dead, yet shall he live again. And, whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die." And, now being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, by his influence, he here imparts spiritual life to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; as, by his power, he will hereafter quicken the mortal bodies of his people. Such a change on the body cannot be too hard for him, who has wrought a greater and more glorious change on our nobler part. That power, which, if the natural sun was extinguished, could restore its light and heat, must be sufficient to lighten a torch.

III. I am now to consider, the wonders of this conquest. That our Lord Jesus Christ might fairly, and in the open field, encounter the king of terrors, he came into the first Adam's world, where this formidable foe had carried his conquests far and near, and where none was found able to withstand him. He came into it, not, as the first Adam, in a state of manhood; not, as he will come again the second time, in his own glory, in the glory of the Father, and attended with the host of heaven. No; he condescended to be made of a woman; to be an infant of days; to be born in an inn; and laid in a manger. This gave death and hell a strange, tho' but a seeming advantage over him. They flattered themselves that they should be able to destroy him, while a helpless infant. They attempted it. They murdered all the other infants in Bethlehem, from two years old and under. The child Jesus alone, who came to fight

with death, and triumph over hell and the grave, escaped their hands:

Death and hell, tho' foiled in their first onset, do not despair. He appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. Hence, they flattered themselves, that, tho' they had not destroyed him, when an infant, by the sword of Herod; they might destroy him, when become a man, by enticing him into sin, which gives to death its destroying power. The prince of this world tempts him to despair, to presumption, to self-murder, to worship the devil. But, though he set upon him with all his power and policy, he could find no corruption in him, to kindle by his temptation.

Had he appeared, which he one day will do, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, death and hell would have fled from him. But he came to this world, *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; such grief, as never man, before or since, endured. Hence his visage was marred more than any man, and his form, more than the sons of men. The powers of darkness hoped, that the toils, the anguish and perplexity, which he endured, would sink and discourage him, or would lead him to leave his work unfinished. Here again they are disappointed. Bitter as his cup was, he says, the cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? He did not fail; he was not discouraged. Faithful to his trust, he did not give over; he did not interrupt his painful services.

What occasioned the most exquisite anguish, did not occasion one irregular desire, or one repining thought. By a few years' obedience, performed in such trying circumstances, he brought in an everlasting

lasting righteousness, and accomplished what all the angels of heaven could not have done, in millions of ages. Thus, when God's hand was upon him, bruising him, and putting him to grief, he still appeared the man of God's right hand, whom he had made strong for himself, to finish a work the most important and glorious.

God *made him sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. He stood charged with millions of sins, with the sins of an innumerable multitude. Yet this could not enable his foes to overcome him. It was at his Father's call, and by his Father's appointment, that he undertook to answer for all these sins. In heart, in lip, in life, he remained holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin and sinners. He could challenge his enemies; "which of you convinceth me of sin." He shone in the beauties of holiness all the while he was made sin for us, as really as he now shines at the Father's right hand; or as he will shine at last, when he comes the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

How wonderful doth it appear, that Christ should redeem us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us! When Balak wished to ruin Israel, he sent for Balaam to curse them. Christ, being made a curse for others, by the will of the Father, did not sink under it; he was able to bear it, to remove it; and to turn the curse into a blessing. While he bore it, he still remained the blessed Jesus. By bearing it, he hath become the source of blessedness.

The arrows of the Almighty reached the soul of Christ. The arrows of death and hell reached and *killed his body*. But, in killing it, death and hell received a wound, which will never be healed. The Lord of life appears before an earthly judge, is falsely accused,

cused, is condemned, is crucified. Death lets out his heart's blood. But that blood is the price of our redemption from death and hell. Death separates his soul from his body. But neither of them is separated from his divine person. Little did the powers of death and hell imagine, that every blow they gave to Christ, would recoil upon themselves; and that their seeming victory was their real overthrow. Christ, by death, destroyed death; wrested the sword from the seeming conqueror; and beat, with his own weapon, the insulting foe.

The Prince of life is laid in a grave. There his enemies hope to detain him. They endeavour to make the sepulchre sure. They roll a stone upon the mouth thereof. They seal it. They set a watch. This was the day, they had longed for. And now, with joy and satisfaction, they look on Jesus and his cause, as dead and buried, never to live, never to rise again. But the joy of the wicked was short. Had all the mountains on earth been planted on the mouth of his grave; had all the devils of hell been placed there to watch his body, they could not have kept him in the grave one moment beyond his time. He, who, by dying, had fully paid our debts, in being raised from the dead, receives a public and ample discharge. He, who had suffered as a criminal, is thus declared to be the Son of God with power.

Such was the wonderful victory obtained by Jesus. But it was not obtained for him. The Prince of life needed not such a victory for himself. For you, believers, is this victory obtained, for the poor, as well as the rich; for the low, as well as the high; for babes, as well as for men in Christ. For thee, whose faith

is like a grain of mustard seed, or, like a small spark surrounded by a heap of ashes; even for thee, was this astonishing victory obtained.

HAVING directed your thoughts to the Enemy, to the Conqueror, and to the Wonders of the Victory represented in the Text, I have still to shew how complete that Victory was.---This Part of the Subject I reserve for another Discourse.

SERMON

SERMON XXII.



ON DEATH.



ISAIAH xxv. 8.

HE WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH IN VICTORY.

IV. **I** AM now to illustrate the completeness of Christ's conquest over death.

For this purpose, I would first call your attention to the great things he accomplished on earth; and then, to the evidence of his having accomplished them, arising from his exaltation and glory.

I. I would call your attention to the great things which he accomplished on earth.

There was not one criminal action, one sinful word, one irregular thought or desire, of which his people were guilty, which he did not expiate. He had engaged by his voluntary covenant or undertaking, he had it in his charge, and he had it upon his heart, that be their sins ever so great, or the circumstances attending them ever so aggravating, he should make a perfect atonement for them all. Had not this been the case, it could not have been said of him, that, "by one offering, he hath per-
fected

“ fected for ever them that are sanctified.” He needs not to come, a second time, to finish transgression, for he did not bow his sacred head on the cross, till he could say, *it is finished*. He has so thoroughly accomplished this work for his people, that, through the endless ages of eternity, they shall never need another to accomplish it for them. And, what is the consequence of this? The complete remission of sin, which is the sting of death.

If sin be the sting of death, the Christless sinner will find, that death hath as many stings, as he hath committed sins. And they are thousands, and tens of thousands; yea, millions, and millions of millions. Yet not one of these innumerable stings remain to hurt the believer, Micah vii. 19. “ He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Even as Antichrist is to be cast, as a milstone, into the midst of the sea, and never to rise any more, Psal. ciii. 12. “ As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Death’s sting may be sought for, and diligently enquired after, but it shall not be found. Remember, O believer, when about to die, the sting of death is plucked out, is gone, is removed, as far as the east is from the west. How sweet, how comfortable an evidence, that Christ hath swallowed up death in victory. Who would dread an enemy at such a distance?

Again, Jesus hath not left one precept, one jot or tittle of the law, unfulfilled. It became him to fulfil all righteousness. O, my brethren, had every angel in heaven been made flesh, born of a woman,

and made under the law; they could not have magnified the law as he hath magnified it. For, by the worth and dignity of his person, as the Son of God, he is infinitely higher, than the highest of the angels. From him they had their being, him they worship, and him they obey. The law, which is the strength of sin, now declares, that he hath completely obeyed it, as our surety and representative; and, in consequence of this, demands at the hands of justice, that the bodies of all who sleep in Jesus, shall be raised up from the dead incorruptible and glorious. The law consents, the law requires, that, according to the riches of the Father's love and grace, believers shall be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and in due season glorified. The law would not be the just, and perfect, and holy law, which indeed it is, if it did not secure the resurrection of the body, as well as the salvation of the soul. The law is friendly to the believer, for the believer's best friend and head has done it infinite honour. It consents to, and approves all the blessings, which grace bestows, either here in time, or hereafter through the endless ages of eternity.

Again, Christ hath redeemed his people from every part of the curse. He, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, did not thus redeem by halves. As the first Adam brought the whole of the curse on all his posterity, not a part of it on one man, and a part of it on another; so, the second Adam hath redeemed his people from the whole curse, by being made a curse for them. The curse goes out and comes in, it lies down and it rises up with the unconverted sinner. But the poorest individual, the meanest, the most despised of the household

hold of faith, is so far from being accursed in life or in death, that, wherever he is, and wherever he goes, he is the blessed of the Lord: blessed in his going out, though sent an exile into a strange land; blessed in his coming in, though dragged into a prison, or cast into a dungeon. Let his life be long or short; in pain or ease; in riches or poverty; to him there is no curse. The blessing of the Lord is upon him, in time, and through eternity. The grave, I acknowledge, hath an outward appearance of the curse; but that resemblance shall be done away, and saints shall appear in body, as well as soul, the blessed of the Lord, in the morning of the resurrection. Had sin and the curse never entered, death and the grave had never been. As certainly, therefore, as sin and the curse are removed, death also shall disappear: In the new Jerusalem "there shall be no more death."

Farther, The devil hath the power of death; and there is not one devil, who was not overcome, and led in triumph by Christ on the cross, where the powers of darkness certainly thought to have triumphed over him. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that, through death, he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil," Heb. ii. 14. If you ask, hath Satan the power of killing and destroying as he pleases? I answer; he hath the power of death, just as the executioner hath the power of the ax and the halter, by them to inflict upon prisoners, the punishment to which they are sentenced. The devil has a part to act in the death of the unconverted, not in the death of those united to Christ.

The prince of darkness, and the legions of apostate spirits subject to him, were so completely conquered by the death of Christ, that not one of them can approach a saint, either living or dying, without his permission. And, though, for wise and gracious ends, that you may walk more humbly, tenderly, and circumspectly, Christ may give him leave to tempt you, he will not allow him to destroy you. Tempt he may the best, the strongest, and the most experienced of the flock of Christ; but, against the feeblest of them, he shall not prevail. In consequence of Christ's victory over the devil and his angels, they have nothing to do with the death, or with the grave of the saint. None of them can say of him, I am his keeper, and he is my prisoner. These proud spirits are fain to disappear when the saint expires, having no access either to his body, or to his soul. Now, they go about like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour; and, for the last trial of his faith, are often suffered to haunt the chamber, and to disturb the death-bed of the departing saint. But, when the soul leaves the body, it is attended by holy angels; and they dare not, they can not, they shall not come near it. The helpless new-born babe may as soon stay the natural sun in its course, as all the united powers of darkness stop a separate soul, in its flight to glory.

Once more; Christ, by his righteousness, hath obtained the power to over-rule death and the grave, with all that precedes, accompanies, or follows them, for the spiritual, and everlasting good of his people, in a blessed subordination to his own glory. This is a most interesting consideration, full
of

of strength and comfort. Christ, by his obedience and sufferings, hath purchased the direction and government of death and the grave, and of whatsoever is connected with them. Hence, all the pains and sickness, which go before them; the darkness and confusion, which accompany them; the corruption and dishonour, consequent upon them, were all purchased by his blood, and are conducted by his wisdom and power for promoting their best interests. He hath purchased the right to bring light to them out of darkness, order out of confusion, real good out of seeming evil: so that, in the morning of the resurrection, every saint shall see, that he hath done all things well. Not one will regret, that he hath lain so long in the grave. Abel will not lament, that he was the first who entered her gloomy mansions; that he came to them by an untimely death; and that for so many ages, they have detained him. All things, O Christian, are thine; and shall work together for thy good. Life's distresses, disappointments, languishings, and final period; the time, the ner, and every circumstance of thy death, are among the blessings purchased for thee by the precious blood of Christ. Death and the grave could not thus be in the saint's inventory of blessings, or in the triumph of his faith, had not the cross of Christ destroyed all that is evil in them, and made them harmless and friendly to his people.

(2.) I am to consider the completeness of Christ's conquest over death, as demonstrated by his exaltation and his glory.

He was raised from the dead by his God and father,

ther, as a just God and a saviour. The judge of all opened Christ's grave, and bid him come forth, not by a voice of words, but by the exceeding greatness of his power. Hence he is said, Rom. vi. 4. "To be raised by the glory of the Father." Indeed the divine perfections were delightfully, fully, and gloriously displayed in raising up Jesus. Not only wisdom and power, but justice also was there displayed. The circumstances of the event were full of glory. Matth. xxviii. 2---4. "Behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and, for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." The resurrection of Jesus had not been thus glorious, if his victory over death had not been complete.

God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. The height of his exaltation speaks the greatness of his victory. Had it been otherwise, he would not have been invested with a full authority, and a sufficient power to raise from the dead, in glory, all the bodies of his saints, wheresoever they have died, or how long soever they have been buried in the grave; and to change their bodies also, who shall be found alive, at his second coming. Hath Christ by his Spirit renewed your souls, though some of them were twenty, thirty, or forty years dead in trespasses and sins? Remember that being by the right hand of God exalted, he hath received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, to raise your dead bodies; though some of them may have been in the grave thousands of years,

Rom.

Rom. viii. 11. " For, if the Spirit of him, that
" raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you ; he
" that raised up Christ from the dead, shall quicken
" your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in
" you." If he hath made your spirits alive in the
Lord, he will also raise your dead bodies from the
grave. Not one title of what is spoken concern-
ing believers, in this, or in any other chapter of
the book of God, can fall to the ground. All
must have a full accomplishment. Your souls have
experienced a day of God's power. Your minds,
once darkness, are now made light in the Lord. And
your affections, once carnal, are now made spiri-
tual. As certainly as this is done, your bodies, by
the same exceeding greatness of divine power, shall
be raised spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious. The
grace wrought in your souls, is glory begun ; and
is a sure pledge, that, in due time, glory shall be
completed, with respect to your whole man.

The second coming of Christ will be the fullest
demonstration, that he hath completely conquered
death and the grave. He first appeared in the form
of a servant. But we look for that blessed hope,
even the glorious appearing of the great God and
our saviour Jesus Christ. His appearance on mount
Sinai was with an awful and terrible majesty, which
made all the people " exceedingly quake" and tremble,
though that glory was confined to a single mountain.
But Christ's glory, at his second appearing, will fill
all the earth. Christ shall then appear as your life
who believe, Col. iii. 4. " When Christ, who is
" your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear
" with him in glory." Hence the exhortation, 1 Pet.
i. 13. " Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober,
" and

“ and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The apostle expresses himself, as if Christ had hitherto been but little revealed to them, or as if grace had yet done little for them in comparison with that which was to be done for them at last. While Christ was on earth “ making an end of sin, “ and bringing in an everlasting righteousness,” he looked more like a servant than a son. He was not so fully declared to be the only begotten of the Father, even by all the miracles he wrought, as he was by being raised from the dead. Yet it is at his second coming, that he will publicly display that equality with God, which, on earth, he, in a great measure, concealed. He shall then appear to every eye, as the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; and the tongue, which now dares to dispute his personal dignity, shall then be put to perpetual silence. He shall come in his own glory (an expression too big for any mere creature) and all the holy angels with him, and shall sit upon the throne of his glory, Matth. xxv. 31. His glory is great in God’s salvation. Honour and majesty are laid upon him, Psal. xxi. 5. For, as the natural sun exceeds the glow worm in light and lustre; and the works of God excel the finest inventions of men; even so, the throne of Christ, as mediator, is far exalted above all the thrones of all mere creatures. Jesus shall then be attended by all the hosts of heaven. There is not one of their innumerable multitude, which shall not then appear. All shall put on their best robes. And never did they shine so bright, or look so glorious, as they shall appear in that day. And yet they are not
the

the whole of Christ's retinue. He will bring all his saints along with him. By these he is to be glorified; and in these, he is to be admired; 2 Thess. i. 10. Add to this, he shall come in the glory of the Father. The Father crowned him, when he was in the form of a servant, when expiring on the cross, and when lying in the grave. He crowned him, by raising him from the dead, and exalting him at his own right hand. But, at his second coming, he will own him, in such a manner, as he never did before. The riches of his glory shall then be all displayed, that he may put honour on the conqueror of death. How illustrious a display shall then be made of the wisdom, of the power, of the all-sufficiency, of the love, of the grace, of the mercy, of the faithfulness, of the unchangeableness of the Father, that day can alone declare.

I doubt not that there may be some who now hear me, "who through fear of death have been all their life time subject to bondage." Give me leave to tell such, they will never get rid of their alarming apprehensions, till they shelter their guilty souls by the merits of the Redeemer's blood and righteousness. Go, wherever else you will, these apprehensions will follow you; and, when the king of terrors approaches, will increase. Under the shadow of his wings who is the prince of life, and hath finished transgression, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, your souls may dwell at ease. It was thus, and thus only, that Paul, instead of fearing, desired to depart, that he might be with Christ. In a place of refuge, which God has provided, and to which he invites you, you must be safe. All other refuges are of man's invention;

† S s s

and

and, when you trust to them, will, as the broken staff of Egypt, fail and disappoint you. Here and here alone, you will find “a refuge from the storm, “a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in “a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in “a weary land.” The power of the enemy may sooner extinguish the glorious luminaries of heaven, nay, may sooner dissolve the universe, than force thee from this place of refuge, or hurt thee in it. Thro’ free, unmerited grace, the gates of this city stand open, by night and by day; and from the one end of the year to the other, are open to every trembling, or desponding soul. Here, whoever will, may turn in, secure of a ready welcome. There is no question of your kind and favourable reception. The only question is, will you, who can no where else be safe and happy, turn in hither? The invitations to do so, run in the most general and unlimited language: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the “waters.” “Come unto me all ye that are weary “and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Let “him, who is athirst, come, and whosoever will, “let him come.” Shall it be any longer a question, whether you will hearken to these gracious offers? Shall death surprise you halting between two opinions on such a subject? Shall not some soul now say, “I will no longer dispute against the Lord’s “command, and my own interest. Blessed Jesus, “save me from death, and from him, who hath “the power of it, even the devil. I fly to thee to “cover me.”

By the doctrine of Jesus “swallowing up death in victory,” God hath made his people, in all ages and countries, to “lie down as in green pastures, and to
“feed

“ feed as by the still waters.” O that the distressed and fearful, the aged and languishing of Christ’s flock, would feed and feast on this rich spiritual provision. O, study to become partakers of all the comfort of this victory, and to give God all the glory.

It was obtained for a chosen number ; not, as some say, conditionally for all, certainly for none. A matter, wherein the glory of Góð and the happiness of mankind was so deeply concerned, was of too great consequence, to be left to the precarious determination of man’s free will. God tried free will in a state of innocence ; and it failed in the trial. And do you think, that God will commit the success of his important schemes to the casual choice of free will, in Adam’s depraved offspring ? To this chosen number, all of every tongue, kindred, and nation, who believe in Jesus, assuredly belong. Faith unfeigned is as sure a sign of election, as the rising sun is, of approaching day. Doubt not this, from a sense of your unworthiness. It is a victory wholly of grace. Grace contrived, and grace accomplished it. And all your triumphant shoutings, when you come forth from your graves at the last day shall be, “ Grace, grace.” The victory was gained by a person so near to you, that none can be more so ; even by your own head and husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was obtained by Christ, at the call and appointment of him, who is in covenant with you as your God and Father.

O, that these considerations may prove as so many cords, to draw your hearts to Christ, who are yet afar off ; and to bind *your* hearts more firmly and closely to him ; who have in some measure been already brought near to him.

Let me address those especially of the seed of the people of God, who have been living many years without any interest in this glorious conqueror. How delightful the prospect, that when pious parents shall be removed by death, instead of the parents shall be the children, more honoured in preserving and building up Zion, than if they had become kings and princes in the earth. O, that it were realised, and that the children of the faithful, who have hitherto rejected, were even, now drawn to Christ. The wise man, saith Solomon, hath his eyes in his head. He foreseeth the evil and hideth himself. Whereas, the simple pass on and are punished; dreaming that all is safe, till they drop into the bottomless pit. Death and the grave are before you. The youngest of you need not look to a distance, or strain his eyes to discern their approach. And where can you hide yourselves, save in the rock Jesus, to which many of your now deceased friends in like circumstances, fled, and found safety? Can you desire a greater security from the sting of death, and the strength of sin, than the security offered you by one, who has fully expiated the guilt of sin, and has not suffered one jot or tittle to fall from the law, without being fulfilled? Can you desire a better security from the curse of the law, than that which is given you by the Son of God, made a curse for you? Can you wish for a surer defence against him, who hath the power of death, even the devil, than *his* power who hath spoiled, and trampled under foot, and caused to fall as lightening from heaven, principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world? Death and the grave are but a little way before you. To
whom

whom can you apply, to ward off the terrible evils you dread from them, save to him, who is disposed by his love, entitled by his merits, enabled by his power, and engaged by his faithfulness, to turn the curse into a blessing? Can you doubt his love, who endured such exquisite sorrows for your salvation? Can you question his title to dispose of blessings, for which he hath paid an adequate price? Can you fear lest any thing prove too hard for that power, by which the wide extended universe was brought into being, and is still preserved? Or, can you imagine, that he who hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins, will suffer a soul, entrusted to him by the Father, to perish; or one promise, which he hath made for the encouragement of faith, to be broken?

“ Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”

“ Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory

“ through Jesus Christ our Lord.”



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